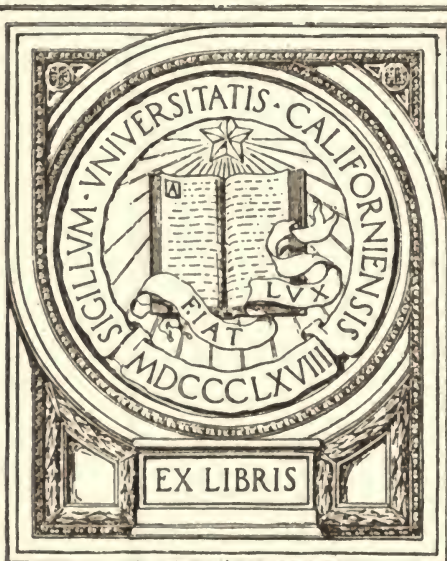




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BLANID.

BLANID.

BOOK OF
DEIRDRE.

BY

ROBERT D. JOYCE,

AUTHOR OF "DEIRDRE."



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ARGUMENT.

BLANID (THE BLOSSOM-BRIGHT), daughter of the King of the Isle of Man, is sought in marriage by the princes of Western Europe. She refuses them all. At length she falls in love with Cuhullin, the son of her father's most powerful enemy. The princes form a league to win her, and gathering their fleets, sail to Dun Dalgan, where they elect Cuhullin leader of the expedition. They besiege and sack the stronghold of Mana. At the distribution of the spoils, Blanid, by a stratagem, is won and taken away by Curoi, prince of South Munster. Cuhullin pursues Curoi, and overtakes him at the foot of the Mountains of Blama, where they fight for the possession of Blanid. Cuhullin is vanquished, and Curoi bears Blanid away in triumph to the south. After some time the lovers meet again, and with the help of Blanid's

foster-mother make a plot for the slaying of Curoi, which is done on the night of the Feast of Samhain, and Blanid is borne away to Eman by Cuhullin. Curoi's minstrel follows them, and at the hunting feast of Rincan-Beara dashes down his harp, seizes Blanid, and throws himself with her over the verge of the great rock into the sea beneath, where they are lost for ever.

*O THOU, to come, though yet perchance unborn,
My country's Poet, prince of bards, sublime
'Mongst those who in the Future's gleaming morn
Will make great music, in thy manhood's prime
And day of fame remember me, and climb
My Hill of Rest, and take thy musing way
Unto the place of tombs, and with sweet rhyme
Stand thou beside my headstone lone and gray,
And strike thy sounding harp and sing no little lay!*

*For I am of the race of those longsyne
The makers of heroic minstrelsy,
Though oft in youth, caught in his silken twine,
I sang of Love, to lay and melody
Made by the ancient bards of high degree,
Or rustic singers of the lowly cot,
And many a thorny path I've cleared for thee,
And sowed some seeds in many a hidden spot
That bloom a little now where flowers of song were
not!*

*Though many a field I've searched of foreign lore
And found great themes for song, yet ne'er would I
Seek Greece, or Araby, or Persia's shore
For heroes and the deeds of days gone by ;
To my own native land my heart would fly,
Howe'er my fancy wandered, and I gave
My thoughts to her and to the heroes high
She nursed in ages gone, and strove to save
Some memory of their deeds from dark oblivious
wave !*

*And not for gold I sang, nor foolish greed
With easy steps to reach Fame's hallowed ground ;
For love of Song I piped my sylvan reed,
And sometimes too essayed a bolder sound
To wake men's souls to nobleness, and found
Each effort to my heart new guerdons bring,
And though few laurels wreath my temples round,
My task is wrought in stirring even the string
Of the bright harp that yet beneath thy touch shall
ring !*

In this some bloom of Fancy may'st thou find: —

Heroes and heroines from the dusky haze

Of Eld I've called, and limned them, heart and mind,

As best I could, in all their thoughts and ways

Of love and war; and if it win thy praise

And thy approving smile, I ask no more

Than this, to add one green leaf to the bays

In learning and in song my country wore

*When all the world was dark, save her, in days of
yore!*

BLANID.

THE FLOWER FEAST IN MANA.

IN Mana of the Sea there reigned a king
Far famed for valor and for treasures rare
Of gems and gold and many a precious thing
Bright as the stars in frosty midnight air ;
One daughter dear he had, within the ring
Of the round world the fairest of the fair,
And through the lands the loud-tongued wind of
fame
Blew far and near the bloom-bright Blamid's name.

As in some regal garden a young rose

Buds into bloom 'neath fostering sun and

wind,

And each successive day new beauty shows

Of leaf or stem beyond its lovely kind,

Till in the summer's midst it smiles and glows

Fairest of all with pearly dewes refined,

So grew that lady peerless, pure and good,

To the first morn of perfect womanhood.

And many a lay the wandering minstrels made

To the bright beauty of that Flower of flowers,

From Eman's hall and Tara's laurel shade

To Gwydilod and high Tintagel's bowers ; —

From Gallia's shores by ocean broad embayed,

To the bleak isles where misty Coolin
towers,

Her praises spread from eager land to land,

By the strong wind of fame for ever fanned.

And men of high renown, the bold and brave,
Who ne'er before felt love illume their breasts,
Strove for the right with splintering lance and glaive
To wear her joyful colors on their crests ;
Poet and mighty prince and lord and slave
Spoke of her, great kings sought her hand, and
quests
By knights forlorn for her were underta'en
To take her from her sire, but all in vain.

And though a quest of danger and of dread,
Thick thronged the knights on it, as summer
bees
Swarm round a hive in thousands ; many a head
Grinned ghastly o'er her father's gate of these
Misguided champions valorous, fancy-led,
Who to Green Mana came across the seas,
Feeding their hearts with vain hopes all the while
To win that far-famed maid by force or guile !

Yet on those days when in his kingly hall

Her father held high court, and strangers came
From the earth's farthest ridge remote, and all
Sunned themselves in the smiles of that fair
dame,

On prince and knight and squire, on great and small,

Her glorious eyes beamed unimpassioned flame,
As though her maiden heart could ne'er respond
To the soft touch of love's enchanted wand.

For, as the crystal well whose bosom sheen

Sparkled within her garden of delight,
And mirrored all the flowers and leaves of green
And sun by day and moon and stars by
night,

But kept no image there, her heart serene

Took all impressions, sorrowful or bright,
With care unclouded and with love unwarm,
And treasured in its depths no hallowed form.

But every heart hath its appointed hour
To wake to love's immortal joy or pain,
To feel through every nerve the tyrant's power,
And weep or laugh with gladness 'neath his
reign.

It chanced upon a day to Blamid's bower
Uprode her sire with all his sylvan train,
And called her forth, with hounds and huntsmen bold
To chase the wild deer in the summer wold.

Fair as the moon and her attendant throng
Of glittering stars in heaven's blue firmament,
To sounds of huntsman's horn and minstrel's song
With her fair maids around her forth she went :
Then spread the many-voicèd chase along
The dales, the woods, the wind-waved mountain
bent,
Like a gay streamer of the northern sky,
Sparkling and shifting till the noon drew nigh.

Then reined she up her steed where rose the tune

Of merry birds half mad with summer glee,

In a lone hollow that with answering croon

Of murmuring leaves and winds sang joyously :

Below her in the lake the sky of noon

Was mirrored, and beside her many a tree

Gleamed bright with fragrant blooms, and singing

rills

Shot down in music from the shadowy hills.

Behind her, grim to heaven a moorland faced,

Home of great boars, and huge primeval kine

Whose savage bulls' loud bellowing shook the

waste

At blink of early morn or day's decline :

Up from its midst, with wizard woods embraced

Of giant oak and strong sky-towering pine,

A dark hill with a bleached and barren skull

Towered o'er that region weird and wonderful.

Now, from beneath that hill, upon the breeze
Sudden the clamor rose of hounds and horn,
Then came a bellowing sound that shook the trees,
As shakes a summer gust the shivering corn.
Trembling young Blamid looks ; anon she sees,
With earth-consuming strength of fury born,
A mighty bull come thundering through the
brakes,
Showering the moss behind in skyward flakes !

Onward he came with speed like the wild wrack
Of clouds pursued by tempests in their ire,
White foam-flakes on his brindled sides and back,
Flames darting from his burning eyeballs dire,
Two fierce hounds and a bold knight on his track, —
A knight whose javelin flashed like azure fire,
Whose harness gleamed, whose horse outstripped
the blast
In Barna's wood, spurring behind him fast !

Trembling bright Blanid sat, without essay

From that fell spot of peril forth to go,

As one who from the vale, when suns of May

Put forth their strength on Pyrenean snow,

Sees o'er him th' avalanche its power display,

And, dazed with danger, waits for death be-
low,

Unknowing what to do, so sat the maid

On her gay palfrey in that hollow glade !

On came the wrathful bull with tenfold wrath

At sight of her rich robe of many dyes,

Fast spurred the noble knight beside his path,

With well-poised form and valor-sparkling eyes ;

In his right hand the javelin as a lath

Quivers, then like a lightning flash it flies

Forward shrill hissing, riving its red way

Deep through the great heart of its giant
prey !

As when an earthquake shakes the solid ground
From caverns deep where fires infernal burn,
From its high station on some lofty mound
A huge rock falls and shakes the earth in turn,
The forest trembles to its utmost bound,
Back the lake's gorge the waters choke and
churn, —

So fell that mighty bull beside the shore
With deafening shock and loud rebellowed roar.

And as some lovely flower that all day long
Laughing in air and sun the hours did pass,
Torn from its bed the green mound's blooms
among,

Now helpless withers by the fallen mass,
So Blamid, from her frightened palfrey flung
Lies still upon the blossom-jewelled grass,
No little page anigh, or tearful maid,
With pitying hands to raise her lovely head.

But he was there, that hunter beautiful,
 Cuhullin, Eman's noblest Red Branch Knight ;
He raised her gently up, and in the lull
 Of her short swoon kissed face and forehead bright,
Kissed golden hair and eyes no longer dull,
 For love's first touch brought back their sweetest
 light,
And half-shed tears and smiles, and blushes too
Unto her cheeks like the red rose's hue.

He looked on her and found her radiant face
 Beautiful beyond all his heart could dream,
She looked on him with sweet and modest grace,
 And blushed and looked once more. The love
 supreme
That years of joy nor misery, time nor place,
 Could change, awoke with its immortal gleam,
And stirred each young heart to its inmost nook,
And lightened in each eye and smile and look.

Of danger or of time they take no heed

Till round the lake sweet echoes roll and run,
And up the forest path at topmost speed

Come the gay courtiers spurring one by one :
Fondly he kissed her, light sprang on his steed
And through the wildwood vanished ; wind and
sun

Played as he went upon his face and hair,
Making strange gleams of wondrous glory there.

Then sat she brooding for a little time

Amidst the grass and fragrant blossoms gay
Of the sweet place : the merry wild-birds' chime
She heard not, heeded not the flowers' display
Of beauty all around : then did she climb

Into her golden selle, and rode away
Silent and very glad, till with surprise
Her maid saw love's first brightness in her
eyes.

And he :— across the stream and through the wood

With lightsome heart he went, and 'neath the shade
Sped downward hopefully, till, where the flood,

Enlarged by many streamlets, tumbling made
Down a steep precipice in merry mood

Its path of silver foam, his course he stayed
Nigh the cliff's foot, beneath an oak whose head
O'er flowers innumerable and sweet grasses spread.

For in the midst of a small mead it grew,

Where the bright Goddess, Ainè, Queen of
Flowers,

Delighted with its pleasures, thither drew

Sweet winds, warm beams and soft, life-giving
showers :—

There all the lovely blooms that ever knew

The airs of springtide or the summer hours
Showed themselves to the butterflies and bees,
And glad birds singing o'er them in the trees.

Around the fragrant place high cliffs arose

Save where the path led downward by the fall
Of the sweet murmuring stream, and where in
throes

Of elfin laughter o'er a mossy wall
Of rock it left the mead to its repose,
Far wandering seaward through the forest tall,
Where ringdoves cooed to it and larks sang o'er,
And many a bank of foxglove decked its shore.

Here while his horse grazed on the grassy bank,
And while his hounds slept by him, he lay
down

On the fresh-smelling sward and sweetly drank
The wine of thought, until the far-off crown
Of the old hill grew dim : then soft he sank
Into deep sleep, and love and its renown
Forsook him not even then, for in his dreams
He walked alone anigh two singing streams.

And on the level sward that lay between

These warbling waters clear, bright garlanded
With many-scented blooms, the gentle Queen
Of Flowers and Summer, Ainè, towards him
led

Her handmaids in their flowing kirtles green,

A coronal of lilies on each head :
And as she drew anigh with heavenly grace,
Fair Blanid's form she wore and Blanid's face !

Unto a bank where many violets grew

She came and stood, while one beside her played
Upon a golden lute, and ever drew
Sweet strains from it, and sang, " Afraid !
afraid

Of love am I ! — to yearn as lovers do,

To laugh and weep by turns, to stand dismayed
At every cloud, to sigh for naught, to prove
All joy and bitterness, — and yet I love ! "

And as she sang they moved, and back again
O'er the fresh blossoms passed, yet to his
ear,

As they moved farther on, the handmaid's strain
Floated along the meadow, and more clear,
More piercing still with passion's bliss and pain
It grew and grew, until a thrill of fear
Shot through him at the marvel, and he woke
Nigh the dark shadow of the ancient oak.

His horse was grazing near, his hounds at rest,
Yet scarce a spear-length from him, on the
ground,

Sat a bright man in minstrel's colors drest,
Playing upon a harp whose lovely sound
Filled all the place : — upon his stalwart breast
A black beard flowed, and ivy leaves enwound
His broad brows, while, beneath, two dark eyes shone
And a fair face unbrowned by wind and sun.

Upstood the knight, but not with hand on hilt,
For still the minstrel stirred not, and he
said, —

“O rich-robed stranger, tell me what thou wilt
Of thine own mortal origin, but bred
With gods thou wert, or in some palace built
By the Sid People, for methinks I tread
In heaven while thou art playing! Who art thou,
Man of the pleasant face and wreathèd brow?”

Upstood the minstrel glittering in the moon
That now had risen and quenched the star which
sees

Each day's red flame expire, — “A boon! a boon
I ask of thee, O Knight! The melodies
That my harp uttered will delight thee soon
If thou wilt follow me: beyond those trees
A cave there is where we can shelter find
From the damp night dews and the chilly wind.

Then call thy horse and hounds and follow me :—

Men name me Ferkertnè, the lord of song,
And Curoi's bard, from where Tonn Cleena's sea
Buffets flat Beramain with billow strong.

Then come! I've spread the warm cave's floor
for thee

With moss and blooming heather, and the throng
Of fancies fresh now flitting through my brain
I'll sing to thee to-night, if thou art fain !”

At the cave's mouth they sat where clear as day
'Tween two high pines the silvery moonlight
fell,

And with blithe music passed the hours away,
And converse, and Ferkertnè 'gan to tell
How he had sailed across the salt sea spray
To look on Blamid's face, and in the well
Of Poesy to bathe his soul, and sing
Songs of her beauty to his lord and king.

“But now,” he said, “the moon soars o’er the pine
That crowns the eastern crag, and we will
press

Our heathery couch and let the Night divine
Cover us with her sweet forgetfulness.

To-morrow morn the Beltane sun will shine
And we will seek strong Mana’s hold and bless
Our souls with sight of her fair face, and see
Their Feast of Flowers and all their pageantry.”

The morn rose fair and strong Cuhullin woke,
Placed food for horse and hounds, and in the
cave

Left them, and with the minstrel from the Oak
And Mead departed upward by the wave
Of the wild stream, and soon the woodland folk
On paths they met trolling a merry stave
As they went on, and, further, on the plains
Stout husbandmen in flower-bedizened wains.

And further still, on the broad royal way

The crowds increased, as, when the rains pour
down

From far Sleemis to Crotta's mountains gray,

Allo and Dallo, and the waters brown

Of Clyda, and strong Mulla white with spray,

And Funcheon tumbling fast by rock and town,
Swell the Blackwater's tide, so from each glen,
Hamlet and hold poured crowds of laughing men,

Women and children on the royal road

That Beltane morn, yet, nathless some were there
Who groaned in secret 'neath pale sorrow's load,
Remorse's sting, or cloud of black despair ;
For life's fair holidays, howe'er bestowed,

Soften not grief for all, nor brighten care ;
Yet on they went, life's pearls, life's heavy clods,
The hearts that blessed and those that cursèd the
Gods !

Anigh strong Mana's hold, in raiment new
Of summer bloom a hollow vale spread out
Its meadowy bosom to the sun and dew,
Encircled by a sacred wood where, stout
'Gainst time and change, the towering pine-trees
grew,
And strong oaks bade defiance to the shout
Of wintry storms, and ash and beeches green
Shadowed the copse where wild things played un-
seen.

And on the midmost sward, like giant thrones,
Reared by primordial hands, austere and grim,
Spread the great circle of Druidic stones,
High precinct of the Gods, wherefrom the hymn
Of the king's priests uprolled in varied tones
That now made bright by turns, and now made dim,
The eyes of the vast concourse all around
The sacred wood-skirts and the sloping ground.

A space beyond the circle's open gate,
 Arched o'er the flower-strewn way stood two
 oak-trees,
Whose trunks, tall pillars, well had borne the weight
 Of all their leafy wealth long centuries :
Now each towered smiling grandly on his mate,
 Bedecked with many garlands, while the breeze
Shook their broad branches with a voiceful quiver,
Like the light murmuring of some gladsome river.

Beyond the oaks, a good spear-cast across,
 Lay piled a circle of dry wood and fern
And withered larch-boughs and thyme-spiced moss
 And sea-grass from the home of swan and tern,
And aromatic pine and last year's floss
 Of the white marsh flax, and all flowers that learn
Of God to scent earth's woods, from th' inward
 pyre
Waiting the high priest and the sacred fire.

And nigh the roadway, on a dais raised

High o'er the perfumed meadow, sat the King
Upon a golden seat, and all amazed

With love and wonder, 'mid a blooming ring
Of bright-clad maidens in a robe that blazed

With gems, Cuhullin saw fair Blanid fling
More garlands toward the oak-trees, singing sweet
To the light cadence of the moving feet.

And more amazed he saw the minstrel go

To the young maids, and with his harp-strings
bare

Wake magic sounds thereon, until more slow

The dancing feet moved, and their joyous air
He matched with kindred music : soft and low

It warbled first, till with the dancers fair
He moved toward the green trees, then loud it rang
With his sweet voice and theirs, and thus he
sang : —

“Come hither with song and with glances bright :

Sing to the Glory who walks his way

For ever unchanged o’er the arching height,

The Helper, the Maker of man’s delight,

The Father of Morning, whose piercing ray

Illumes the shores where the darkness lay ! —

Sing to the Softener of grief, the Sower,

The Ripener, the Reaper, the Lord of day,

The Slayer of death and the Life-bestower !

“When Light withdrew from the Darkness old,

And the fresh blue heavens and the crystal sea

Laughed in the primal Morning’s gold,

Earth’s rocky wastes lay stark and cold

Without voice of zephyr or streamlet’s glee.

Then the golden Sun smote the barren lea

And the shores and the hills and the plains and passes,

And the birthday was of the shrub and tree,

Of the painted flowers and the fragrant grasses.

“The clouds arose from the ocean’s breast
And fell on the deserts in silver showers,
The streams awoke in their sweet unrest,
And the new-born winds at the sun’s behest
Sang in the leaves of the springing bowers,
Till the waste, transformed, was a world of flowers,
Where the glory of light from the dews would glisten,
And they whispered sweet in the windy hours
With no eyes to see them, no ears to listen.

“Then the Maker of Gods, who ruled the span
Of the starry kingdoms, the sun, the earth,
To the uttermost spaces ere time began,
Of the red clay wrought him the primal Man,
Of the bright flowers fashioned the woman’s birth ;
For the joy of their bodies and hours of mirth
He gave them the grape and the wine to follow,
The game of the forest, the fish of the firth,
And the corn and the fruit of the plain and hollow.

“ But best for them and their soul’s delight,
The flower-web of glory round earth he spun,
The purple of Heather, the Mead-blooms bright,
The May and the delicate Woodbine’s white,
The Daisy fresh, and the darling One,
The Hyacinth young ; and a splendor shone
From their bloom in meadow and wood-glade stilly,
And the garden glowed in the golden Sun
With the Pink and the Rose and the saffron Lily.

“ Come hither, come hither, with garlands meet
For Youth’s bright brow and for Age’s head,
Of the fairest flowers that the mornings greet
With perfumed breath and with kisses sweet
In glen and meadow and garden bed ;
For Summer is come and the Winter’s sped
From moor and mountain, from field and forest,
And the birds in the greenwood woo and wed,
And the blossoms laugh where the frosts lay hoarest !

“Come hither, come hither, our song to weave
Of joy where the old Oaks branching rise !
Under their shadows let no heart grieve,
Let love meet love and its truth believe,
And laugh meet laughter ! — while sunny skies
Brighten the sward and the sweet hour flies, —
From fell and forest, by spring and river,
From brake and bank where the dewdrop lies,
Gather the garlands and praise the Giver !”

Now when the song was ended and the dance,
And gracefully again the maids drew nigh
Where the high dais stood, Cuhullin's glance
Fell on the King and marked the old man's eye
Bent on him with a furtive look askance,
Bitter, that seemed to say, “In days gone by
Thy father's blood coursed through a foeman's
heart,
If I can rightly guess whose son thou art !”

But now in th' inner circle a light smoke

Curled upward o'er the pyre, as though it came
From 'tween the high priest's hands, and as he
spoke

With face upturned to heaven the Sun God's name,
Moving his outspread palms the while, there broke

From the sweet perfumed wood a golden flame
Whereat a torch he lit, and, turning, made
His slow way outward to the oak-trees' shade.

Thence with straight-gazing eyes he passed the
King,

And at the East side with loud voice of song
Touched the obedient wood of th' outward ring,

And by the South and West he went along
Unto the Northern boundary ; with a spring

Up to the heavens the flame flew fresh and strong
Where'er he touched, then turned he, while a cry
Of gladness from the concourse filled the sky.

And as he sought again the sacred place,

Swift runners rushed with ready torch in hand,
Caught the fresh flame, and with light feet, whose
trace

The young grass felt not, cut the breeze that
fanned

Each torch, as swept they in their headlong race
East, West, North, South, until throughout the
land,

From sea to seaboard, each extinguished hearth
Laughed in the gladness of the new fire's birth.

Now in the gay confusion and the swaying

Of the crowd to and fro, the minstrel stood
By the tall Knight. "O comrade, thou art playing
A game," he said, "will spill thy valiant blood!
Then get thee hence! No more, no more delaying!

I've seen the King's brow bent in treach'rous mood,
I've heard him speak! O heed the minstrel's fears!
Look yonder, and behold that hedge of spears!"

He started not : he bent his kindly eye

Upon the bright-robed minstrel, as he spoke :

“ Fear not for me, O friend ! What looks awry

Will soon seem straight ; and may Crom’s light-
ning-stroke

Fall on my head when with base soul I fly

The frown of danger, for the golden yoke

Of love is linked around me, and I fear

Nor doom, nor death, while my beloved is near !

“ My father loved her mother and made war

On Mana’s king, whence mortal hatred sprung,

And I was born beneath the selfsame star,

And I must love the daughter, and they’ve
sung,

High bard and minstrel, that ’t is better far

To love and do great deeds when one is young :

And whatsoever weird is on me set

I’ll bear it for her sake without regret !”

“Look to thy neck then, and beware the axe,”

The minstrel said, “for the high King hath
spoken

Thy doom ere this, and Vengeance never lacks

Her bitter food, in breasts of kings awoken ;
With eager wings she flies upon thy tracks
Pursuing thee, and I believe no token
Of safety, but to see thee sit thy steed
Under the oak-tree in yon forest mead.”

Then answered strong Cuhullin, “I am he

To whom fate gave two choices, and who
said,

‘Better to live a short life gloriously

And as a hero die, than, living-dead,
An old man with bent frame and tottering knee,
Tumble into the grave!’ While hope is fed
By her kind looks, I stir not ! Live or die,
Here Blanid’s bright eyes gleam, and here am I !”

Then Blanid's bower-maid, Mora, touched his arm

With a red rose, — "My lady sends thee this,
Fair knight," she said, "and bids thee flee the harm

That threatens thy life and ending of her bliss!"
And she was gone like some bright fairy charm

One meets in desert places but to miss, —
Gone in the crowd that now thronged nigh the
King

To see the people pass the fiery ring.

First came a young betrothèd pair, their heads

All garlanded with flower-buds, side by side,
Light-footed, glad, across the clover beds

Of the fresh mead, more following, till a tide
Of human life and joy drew near the shreds
And ash left in a smouldering circle wide
By the swift flame, where each pair of the
band

Leaped o'er the smoking barrier hand in hand ; —

Leaped in and kissed each other, then sprang out,
And onward danced beneath the ancient trees,
Scattering to right and left with song and shout
Over the grass, — all ages, all degrees,
Passed by the King's seat in that merry rout,
Singing sweet songs and love-woven melodies
Of birth and bloom of flowers and earth's first
prime
And all the gladness of their summer clime.

Then came the firstlings of each herd and flock,
The snow-white lamb, the silken calf, the foal
With wondering eyes, the gray kid from the rock,
And 'cross the smoking ring and round the
bole
Of each tall tree were driven with gentle shock
Of down-poured primroses from ferny knoll
Or sunny bank, and stroke of blossomed spray
Of broom and lilac and sweet-smelling may.

Then for good fortune rode the young knights by,
All life and laughter pacing o'er the ring,
Till with drooped plumes and lance-points raised
on high,
Half-hid in sacred smoke, they passed the King,
A crowd of spears thick as the bearded rye
Upon the wind-blown hill-side following,
And, led by a tall squire, adown the mead
Barana, the King's angry battle steed ; —

Angry and swift and strong, for ne'er before
Had rein or tightened girth upon him pressed ;
With brass-shod hoofs the blossomed sward he
tore

As he pranced down the field in housings dressed
Of silk and gold ; — fierce was the look he wore,
With shining haunch, and broad-extended breast,
And steel-gray coat, and mane of lighter gray
Tossed o'er his proud neck like a torrent's spray.

Now from beside the royal chair a knight
Came smiling forth to pace the charger through,
Sprang on his back, a moment curbed his might
With deft hand, and a doubtful struggle grew
'Tween both, and raged, till, like an arrow's flight,
Up in the air the gallant rider flew
And soon lay on the greensward, and was borne
Out from the throng with shame-faced looks
forlorn.

A second won the fortune of the first.

Then cautiously a third young knight began
To stroke the steed, and well nerved for the worst
Sprang up, and then came down his full-length
span

Upon the sward again like one accurst.

Then cried the wily King, "Perchance yon man
A head and shoulders towering o'er the crowd
May mount my steed and try his mettle proud!"

Cuhullin looked. Behind the royal chair
 Stood Blánid with a red rose in her hand
Upraised, as though it said, "Beware! Beware!
 The coil is round thee! Fly, ere yet the
 brand

Touch thy beloved neck!" But naught so'er
 Of danger now could curb him, and he scanned
The war-steed with admiring gaze, then stood
With eyes cast down awhile in musing mood.

Then drew he near to strong Barana's side,
 And at a bound bestrode him, seized the rein
And plunged him o'er the sward in circles wide,
 Handling him with such care as on the main
The mariner bestows 'gainst wind and tide
 Upon his bark that at the tiller's strain
Obedient turns though rough the course, — so
 led,
Along the echoing field Barana sped.

.

Now through the circle like a flash he went,

And onward 'neath the arching trees, and here,
As he drave rushing on, Cuhullin leant

Forward beside his mane and snatched a spear
From a rough soldier's hand, and frowning sent

A shout against the ranks that, marshalled
near,

Stood ready to fall on him, and who now
Quailed at the darkness on the hero's brow, —

And scattered to each side as doth the pack

Of hungry wolves by lone Morgallion's wave,
That follows swift upon the wild boar's track,

To find him thundering from his hollow cave
Upon them with bright tusks and bristled back

Through brush and reed, — so at the shout he
gave

They scattered right and left, as threatening still
He turned Barana towards the barren hill.

Away with cries and clattering hoofs behind,
Across the stream and through the sacred
grove,

While rose the King's fierce shout upon the wind
Angry, as when in wild Tormana's cove
The beast howls for the prey he cannot find:

Yet howsoe'er his strong pursuers strove
At the King's voice, Barana's hoofs of speed
Soon left them far behind both man and steed.

That eve at set of sun Cuhullin gained
The Waterfall, the lovely Mead and Tree,
And by the cavern's mouth the charger reined,
Alit, and bowed his head and bent his knee
Unto the Gods with thankfulness unfeigned,
And with good hope of happy augury
Barana took, and in the cavern rude
Before him and his own steed spread the
food.

A moment stood he still, and with delight

Beheld the two great steeds their haunches
press

Together, and like ancient comrades bite

The fragrant heap and share the selfsame tress
Of scented clover-blossoms, and affright

The same flies with their tails in friendliness ;
Then laughed he as he said, " This augury
Beginneth well for my beloved and me ! "

THE DESPAIR OF CUHULLIN.

UP from the sapphire depths of space profound
Arose the laughing dawn, and all the skies
Brightened until, beneath, the flowery ground
Laughed in return, and the awakening flies
Outspread their jewelled wings with gladsome
sound

To welcome her, while calls and joyous cries
Of wild things from the bosky dells and lays
Of birds in field and forest sang her praise.

And at her touch Cuhullin woke, though
deep

He slept, forgetting all his joys and woes,
And in glad wonder saw the minstrel reap
The meed of toil in dreamless, calm repose
Beside him on the fragrant heather heap,

His hand upon the harp-frame, while a rose
Red as young Blanid's lips within it lay,
Sole trophy of the merry yesterday.

He laughed unto himself with secret joy

To see his loved one's symbol lying there,
And stole from out the cave, and, to employ

The heavenly hour, across the meadow fair
Walked down to where the wild-birds, nothing
coy

At the tall stranger's presence, filled the air
With tremulous music and the tumbling flood
Answered from green recesses of the wood.

Beside the stream he sat and mused awhile

Till the first sunbeam found the blossomed glade
Through the green leaves, and many a lover's
wile

He formed to meet again the royal maid,
To clasp her hand, to bask him in her smile,
Till, with a look of gladness that betrayed
His heart's resolve, he turned him o'er the dew
Of the fresh mead and sought the cave anew.

At this same hour young Mora to the side
Of Blamid's couch came: "Up!" she said; "the
day,

O mistress! laughs upon the waters wide

And lights the whispering woods! Up and away
Into our garden where the humming tide

From the cool fountain falls in diamond spray
Adown the mossy rocks, and where in glee
The blithe birds sing to welcome morn and thee!

“ And I will bring the lute that thou hast taught
My fingers to make mournful or unsad,
As each fresh mood within thy dear heart wrought
Its influence ; and the merry hours we had
Last morn within the garden will seem naught
This day to thee, for now thy heart is glad
With yon tall hero's love, they say thy mind
Will run on thoughts e'en still more glad and
kind ! ”

Like a young rose touched by the gold of morn,
Blanid awoke, and, looking, laughed and said, —
“ Small wonder since the day that thou wert born
Thou'rt called the Chatterer ! Seems as thou
wert bred
With daws and jays, all merry things that scorn
A silent hour ; but hither thy bright head
Of nut-brown hair, that I may kiss thine eyes
And lips, and pay thee for thy morn's surprise ! ”

'Mid fern and foxglove by the woodland rill

The quick-eyed ousel prinks herself in pride
On the cool bank, when the voice sweet and
shrill

Of her mate calls her, — with dark head aside
She looks this way and that, then runs until

She joins him in the sunshine, — so with glide
Of body and light foot across the room
Young Mora sought her lady's arms of bloom.

And then, as Blanid kissed her, playfully

She broke from out the circling arms and cried,
Clapping her hands, "Ah not for me, for me

That last kiss was ! for yester morningtide,
When thou didst kiss me 'neath the blossomed
tree

Beside the well, thou strovest not to hide
Thy blushes from me ! Ah ! I wis, I wis
The robber of Barana owns that kiss !"

Deeper the Bright One's blush, though well she
strove

To hide it, as the Chatterer cried again, —
“ Oh ! would that I were old enough to love
And know what love is and be loved by men !
I tell thee I would make my champion prove
His mettle among heroes ; in the fen
Of Gormal the Gray Serpent he should slay
With sword and spear before the bridal day !

“ For I was taught by poets sweet and wise
Within my brother's hall what knights should be,
And mine should have a soul of high emprise,
And with brass keels should plough the stubborn
sea

To foreign lands, where untold treasure lies
In dragon's dens, and he should bring to me
The dragon's claws as tokens, and full measure
Unto my house of all the priceless treasure !

“And he should have three hounds with golden
chains

And bells all tinkling like the gay harp’s thrills,
A war-steed from the far-off emerald plains

Of Muman, and a hawk from Norway’s hills ;—
The three sweet Berries of the Yew with stains

Of crimson on them, from Dunthirre’s rills,
He’d bring to me, with the bright Marigold
Three-headed from Birara’s magic wold ;—

“And he—” Here like a posy of fresh pink

Blanid’s fair hand upon her mouth was pressed,
To stay the flood of talk that o’er its brink

Was bubbling now so fast. “Unblest ! unblest
The hapless man,” she cried, “foredoomed to
drink

The bridal cup with thee, for naught of rest
He’ll know till his last life-thread is unstrung,
While thou art near him with thy prattling tongue !

“And yet I love thee, child ; and well I may,
Since thy strong sire, great lord of Beramere,
Gave his life for my father’s in that fray
Waged with Tintagel’s heroes, ere a year
Had crowned thy winsome head with ringlets gay ;
And now thou knowest my heart, oh ! still more
dear

I love thee, thou sweet pearl ! Then come, and bring
Thy lute with thee, that thou mayest play and sing.”

Then forth they went, and through a wicket small
Of brazen tracery sought the garden fair,
Where through the luminous, whispering leaves
did fall

Shafts of white sunlight upon blossoms rare
From every clime ; and nigh the further wall

They sat them down upon a fresh bank, where
The placid fount, the garden’s azure eye,
Returned the love-lit glances of the sky.

And Blanid said, "Sweet blossom of the May,
Sing me a song to cheer me." Eager then
Brown Mora answered, "Shall I sing the Lay
Of Garmon, or the Lady and the Wren,
Or Starry Fingers, or the Twilight Fay,
Or that old mournful song beloved of men
And maids, The Knight forlorn slept in the
Wood,
The Gold Branch, or White Mergal by the Flood,

Or Mora and the Moon, that Tiernan sings,
Our minstrel, or The blooming Almond Tree,
The Mermaid and the Man, or Silver Wings —"
"Sing," said fair Blanid laughing, — "Sing to me
The song that Tiernan made for thee, — that brings
Gladness whene'er 't is sung!" "O mistress!
see,"
Cried Mora, "yon two doves upon their bough!
For them he made this song I sing thee now."

"THE DOVES.

"My little blue doves were born,
 Were born in the windy March,
 Up in the tapering larch
That laughs in the light of morn :
O, so high o'er the meadow !
 O, so high o'er the glen !
And they sit in the leafy shadow,
 The joy and delight of men,
Cooing, with voices flowing
 In melody soft and sweet,
Their necks with the rainbow glowing,
 And the pink on their silver feet.

"My little doves lived together,
 Unweeting of woe and pain,
 Through the days of the winds and rain
And the sunny and fragrant weather ;

And the lark sang o'er them in heaven,
And the linnet from banks of flowers,
And the robin chanted at even,
And the thrush in the morning hours
Carolled to cheer their wooing,
And the blackbird merry and bold
Answered their cooing, cooing
Out from the windy wold.

“When the daisy its eye uncloses,
And the cowslip glistens with dew,
And the hyacinth pure and blue
And the lilies and pearl-bright roses
Prink themselves in the splendor
Of the delicate white-foot Dawn,
'Mid the flowers and the fragrance tender
My little dove's heart was thawed
With love by the cooing, cooing
Of the gentle mate at her side,
And they married in midst of their wooing,
My bridegroom and woodland bride !”

Now take the lute thyself, O mistress sweet,
And sing to me of love, and let me know
What love is, for 't is surely most unmeet
That I should sit in hall and see a glow
In young squires' eyes my morning presence
greet,

Not knowing why. Sing! that I may bestow
Four kisses on thee, — two from me, and two
For one who worships well thine eyes of blue!"

And Blanid took the lute, and "Would that I
Could tell thee, child!" she said. "But since
that noon

He saved me in the forest, the bright sky
Seems brighter, and all things I see a boon
Sent by the Gods who rule in heaven on high,
To give me gladness; but alas! too soon
My father's ire will end it; and to thee
I'll sing my thoughts of what the end may be:—

“WHAT IS THIS LOVE?

“What is this love, — this love that makes

My heart's warm pulses quiver?

They say it is the power that wakes

The hyacinth 'mid hazel brakes,

The lilies by the river,

And that same thing that bids the dove

Sit in the pine-tree high above,

Its sweetheart wooing ;

But oh ! alas ! whate'er it be,

And howsoe'er it comes to me,

It comes for my undoing !

“The lily of the river side

By its sweet mate reposes

Through autumn moons and winter-tide,

To wake in love and beauty's pride

When comes the time of roses,

And in the springing of the year
The doves' sweet voices you will hear
Their vows renewing ;
But oh ! alas ! whate'er love be,
And howsoe'er it comes to me,
It comes for my undoing !

“ O child ! I fear this love, for always pain
It mingles with its joy, I fear, I fear
I know not what while in my heart doth reign
This tyrant. — But the air is sultry here,
And I would see the foxglove's purple stain
And heather, and would smell the blossomed brere,
And love to pluck the forest flowers, and yearn
To trail my robe amidst the fragrant fern ! ”

And forth they went, and left the garden bright
Through a small postern, and 't was joy to see
Their young hearts tasting of the dear delight
Of freedom in fresh woods ; each branching tree

To them towered upward to a glorious height ;

The zephyrs sang, the rill, the bird, the bee,
Sang in return, till all the flowery ground
Seemed pulsing to the sweet pervading sound.

At length they heard the murmur of the river

Wherein the forest streamlets plunge and drown
Their merriment, and 'mid the stir and quiver

Of grasses and green leaves they sat them down
Upon a bank where thyme, the perfume-giver

To flocks and herds on hills and moorlands brown,
Grew thick with bronzed moss, heath, and lady's-
dower,

Wild hyacinth and every woodland flower.

And as they sat, their quickened senses steeping

In the new life and glory of the wood,
Young Mora through the blossomed thicket peeping
Saw a tall man anigh them, where the flood

Adown its pebbly bed went gaily leaping ;—

A minstrel's cloak he wore, a minstrel's hood
Of seven fresh colors bright, and in his hand
He held a glittering harp that lit the strand.

Upon a stone he sat, and silently

Gazed on the crystal tide, while near him played
The river-birds unfrightened. “Hush ! ’t is he !”

Glad Mora cried, “the minstrel, all arrayed
For music as on yesterday ! What glee !

To hear the fairy music that he made !
But hush ! he stirs ;—let ’s take what fortune brings !
He wakes the sounding wires ! He sings, he
sings !”

SONG.

“O Wind of the west that bringest,
O’er wood and lea,
Perfume of flowers from my lady’s bowers
And a strain and a melody, —

While soft 'mid the bloom thou singest
Thy songs of laughter and sighs,
Steal in where my darling lies
With a kiss to her mouth from me !

“ White Rose, when at morn thou twinest
Her lattice fair,
Wave to and fro in the fresh sun's glow
Till she wakes and beholds thee there ; —
When over her brow thou shinest,
Then whisper from me, and press
On her dear head one fond caress,
And a kiss on her yellow hair !

“ O Rose ! and O Wind that found her
'Mid morning's glee !
While the noon goes by, keep ever nigh
With your beauty and melody ; —
With your smile and your song stay round her
Till she closes her eyelids bright ;
Then give her a sweet Good-night
And a kiss on the lips from me ! ”

The first note Blanid heard, her face grew wan,
Half-rose she, trembling, with dilated eyes,
Sat down again, and some sweet flowers that shone
Beside her she plucked up, and like a prize
Belovèd kissed them as the strain went on,
And laughed a little, till, like morning skies
Reddening with dainty rose, the blush that speaks
Of health and joy returned to her fair cheeks.

Then laughed she unto Mora, "He is here!
No minstrel he, but my strong lover true!
Though Death with his pale hand should close mine
ear,
His voice would pierce my fond heart and renew
Its throbbings, lying cold upon the bier,
The grave-clothes round me! Bring him here
and strew
Some flowers upon this sunny bank to bless
Our wondrous meeting and our happiness!"

And Mora plucked the bright fresh-smelling flowers

And strewed them on the bank, then out she ran
With loose hair through the intervening bowers

And down the slope, and, ere the bright-robed man
Knew where he sat, rained kisses sweet in showers

On both his cheeks, and "Come," she said, "the
ban

Of her great sire is on thee ; but let me
In all these things thy kind protector be."

She took his hand in hers, and like a child

He followed her with joyful throbbing heart
Up the green slope, till through the copses wild

He reached the place, and saw new blushes
start

Unto his loved one's fair cheek as she smiled

Like a full moon on him. With lips apart
And upraised hands she stoqd before him, fain
To clasp him to her happy breast again !

Then hand touched hand, and face met burning face,
And sweet words passed, as sweet words will forever
'Tween hearts that love, and 'mid that bloomy place
They sat them down, and in the wide world never
Sat such a pair ; their looks, their smiles, gave grace
And beauty to the spot no thought could sever
From all things round, all things that laugh and live
In sunshine and the gladness sunbeams give !

Said Blanid, " Since the hour I saw thee first
Thou 'rt in my heart ! " Said he, " Since that glad
hour,
My heart has yearned with love's insatiate thirst,
Burning for thee, and some immortal power
Impels me to thee through the best and worst
Of this my life ! " Said she, " Black clouds may
lower
Upon our love, but my love will remain
Unchanged through all, — through all life's joy and
pain ! "

He pressed his lips to hers and to his breast

Her throbbing breast, and said, "Through all I
see

Of peril and of sorrow and unrest,

My love shall grow like yonder vigorous tree
That rears unto the sky its blossomed crest,

Gladdening the forest ; so my love shall be,
Till, as a blast strikes low the proud tree's head,
Fate comes and counts me with the early dead !

" For know, beloved one, my weird and doom !

When I was sixteen summers, Caffa old,
The King's seer, prophesied, and pierced the gloom
Of the veil 'tween us and the Gods, and told
That he who on the morrow would assume

Knighthood should be the pink and pearl and
gold

Of chivalry, and that his fame should die

Only when earth died and the eternal sky.

“ With wrapt eyes still he prophesied, and said,
 ‘ His fame shall be a tree whose branches wide
Shall overspread the world, but he is wed
 Unto a weird, that in the strength and pride
Of early manhood he shall fill the bed
 Of death ! who takes the weird ? ’ And I replied,
‘ I take it ! ’ and a knight was made next day,
The short life and the glorious for my pay.

“ Therefore, O maid ! my love shall bring thee
 sorrow ! ”

“ Therefore,” she cried, “ my love will bring thee
 bliss

Through thy short life, O valiant one ! and borrow
 Light from all things for thee, and what we miss
Of length of days what boots it, when a morrow

Will come at last when we shall fade like this, —
This little flower I hold within my hand,
That, plucked or not, would die upon the strand ? ”

And thus they sat and vowed, till from the bank
Of the bright stream came Mora, lilting sweet
Her Dove Song, then long draughts of love they
drank

Each from the other's eyes, for hours are fleet
When soul meets soul and time is ever blank ;—

And Mora said, "I hear the hurrying feet
Of hunters in the wood and ye must part ;—
Now let me see how heart beats unto heart !"

Upstood they trembling with their love, and he
Opening his arms, unto his breast she flew,
Her fond arms round his neck, and mournfully
She kissed him till he felt the love-born dew
Of her tears on his cheeks. "I see ! I see !"

Cried Mora now, "how true heart beats to true !
Away, before the hunters find the trace,
But come and meet next morn in this bright
place !"

Six times they met. On the sixth morn she said,

“Where is thy war-gear, O brave love of mine?

For I would see thy bright helm on thy head,

Thy battle harness with its bosses shine

Of gold and brass, thy shield with Branches

Red

Graven upon it!” — “Where the salty brine

Rolls up the river mouth,” he said, “they lie

Within my broad-sailed galley for thine eye.

“Then come with me, O love, and in my hall

Of strong Dun Dalgan thou a queen shalt

reign,

And mistress of my fond heart, over all

The ladies of the land, while I attain

All things for love and thee, before my fall

In the great fight upon the fated plain,—

Before I die and laugh no more with thee!”

“Ah! no, no, no!” she cried, “it cannot be!

“What wouldst thou think of me in years to come
If I should list to thee, if I should yield,
When underneath the earth my sire was dumb
And could not speak his wrath with spear and
shield,
When thou wouldst say, ‘She left her happy home,
Her hard heart like a frozen fountain sealed
’Gainst her gray sire! Can she be true to me?’
Ah! no, no, no! Alas! it cannot be!”

They parted, and upon the seventh bright morn,
As he rode upward through the forest wild,
A small black cloud within the east was born
Beneath the sun, and oft looked down and smiled
With serpent face on fields of tender corn
And leaf and flower of woodland calm and
mild,
And lake and stream, as though it whispered, “I
Will soon devour all things beneath the sky!”

And as he rode, the cloud clomb up the east
On the sun's track and swallowed it ; around,
From copse and brake the birds their carols ceased
In terror, and the multitudinous sound
Of the wood's life grew still ; the bristled beast
'Gainst the rough oak his tusks in anger
ground,
The trout sank in the stream, the rabbit fled,
And the brown otter sought his caverned bed.

As he went through the valley of the Mead
And Waterfall and Tree, east, south and west
And the grim north were black : but little heed
He took of all the gloom, as on he pressed,
With high heart, clothed in his battle weed,
To meet his love, his spear in hand, his crest
Brightening the gloom, as on he rode like
Nied,
The God of War, along that river side.

And as he came unto the trysting-place

To find his love, and found no love was there,

His battle-steed, Lia Macha, raised her face

And neighed three times, 'till through the murky
air

The Gods sent lightning from the dreadful space

'Tween the cloud's serpent jaws, and in the glare

He saw the wood surrounded, and the sheen

Of threatening swords the mossy trunks between !

And as he moved the great shield from his back

And poised it on his arm, Lia Macha smote

The ground with earthquake hoof, and still more
black

The gloom became, and from the sulphurous throat

Of the grim cloud burst thunder like the wrack

Of worlds in their destruction, and a moat

The glade seemed in a moment, from the flood

Of rain dashed down from heaven upon the wood !

Then spake he to Lia Macha : "Thou divine,
Bright searcher of the souls of heroes, thou
Who, on the first morn the sharp sword did shine
Of Knighthood in my hand, didst raise thy brow
And neigh portentous till the deafening sign
All Eman shook, as earth and heaven shakes
now

At thy dread voice, comrade of my last fray,
Ah ! bear me well, ah ! bear me well to-day !"

Then raised he high his spear and in the
gleam

Of the pale lightning shook it, till its stave
Trembled, as a young willow by the stream
Amidst the fairy whirlwind, and he gave
The rein to the fleet steed who, like a beam
Piercing the dreadful darkness, onward drave
Against the foeman's thickest ranks that came
With a fierce shout upon him swift as flame !

And round him and Lia Macha flickering played
The lightning, till to every foeman's eye
He seemed a wild bright thing from heaven arrayed
Bursting upon them, and his battle-cry
Smote them as smote the thunder, till afraid
They cowered before him, as he swept anigh
With levelled spear, and through them rushing went
As a fierce bull drives through the mountain
bent!

Then rose a wind around him and between
His foes and him, upon the echoing shore,
And grew in strength and scourged the copses green
With wallowing sound like a huge lion's roar
In haunted forests where no foot has been,
And blew around in circles and up tore
Tall trees from their strong footholds, stem and
spray,
Shaking them as a wild beast shakes his prey!

No more the ambush followed ; yet the storm

With tenfold fury raged, as on he flew

Through hollows with the murderous lightnings
warm,

Through swollen and boiling torrents that upthrew
Their treacherous waves round bright Lia Macha's
form

To clasp her, unavailing, till he drew
Nigh to the valley of the Mead and Tree,
And then the storm passed on and smote the sea.

And the sun shone, and all the forest leaves

Seemed hung with trembling glories glittering,
The blithe red-breasted bird his song that weaves

Upon the hawthorn bush began to sing,
And thrushes spoke, and the lone wight that grieves

At dark gave forth a strain, and many a wing
Of wood-doves struck the air, and blossoms sweet
Laughed in the sunlight round Lia Macha's feet.

And now from the strong charger he alit,
And stroked her 'tween the ears, and led her
down

The mead, to where the brightest spot was smit
By sunbeams till it glittered like a crown
With jewelled blossoms ; then the golden bit
He loosed and set her free, and with a frown
Turned upward to the torrent's ridge of stone
To think upon his misery alone.

He sat upon the rocky ledge, while loud
The river down its passage raged and roared
That erstwhile sang, and o'er him from a cloud
The forest eagle screamed as high it soared
With voice of bitter anger, and a shroud
The grass looked on the meadow, and there
poured
Out from his laden heart without relief
This stammering to himself of deadly grief :—

“Earth, air, and sun, and moon and star,
Of man’s strange soul but mirrors are,
Bright when the soul is bright, and dark
As now, without one saving spark,
While the black tides of sorrow flow,
And I am suffering and I know !

“To my sad eyes that sorrow dims
The greenest grass the swallow skims,
The flowers that once were fair to me,
The meadow and the blooming tree,
Dark as funereal garments grow,
And I am suffering, and I know !”

Then stood he up, and, striding to and fro,
He muttered, “Is she false? Has she betrayed
My presence to her sire? Ah! no, no, no!
It cannot be! Her father’s spies have played
Their part within the wood; and days shall grow
To weary moons, and moons in years shall fade,
Ere I behold her dear face, now she’s gone,
And lost to me for aye!” And he went on:—

“The measured sounds of dancing feet,
The songs of wood-birds wild and sweet,
The music of the horn and flute,
Of the gold strings of harp and lute,
Unheeded all shall come and go,
For I am suffering, and I know !

“No kindly counsel of a friend
With soothing balm the hurt can mend.
I walk alone in grief, and make
My bitter moan for her dear sake,
For loss of love is man's worst woe,
And I am suffering, and I know !

“Misery, companion dread,
Thou art partner of my bed.
Soul to soul will you and I
Ever on the same couch lie,
While life's bitter waters flow,
And I am suffering, and I know !”

.

Then cried he, "Shall I suffer till the hour
When through the fated wound my soul shall
fly?

Can battlemented walls, or fosse or tower,
Or king or vassal, shut her from mine eye?
No! By my hand of valor! if there's power
In sword and spear I'll win her ere I die!
Nor time, nor tide, nor intervening sea,
Nor bitter wave, shall be a bar to me!"

And now he called Lia Macha and bestrode
Her bright back with its gay caparison.
And through the glen and rain-wet forest rode
In sorrow, till the river-mouth he won,
Where lay his long-hulled galley, and where
glowed

The minstrel's robe th' embattled poop upon,
As he sat waiting with his harp, again
To greet the hero's ears with some blithe strain.

And when the slant sun lit the waters wide,
Lia Macha stood within her brazen stall
Upon the galley's deck, and by her side
Barana whinnied like the gladsome call
Of friend to friend ; and favoring wind and tide
Now turning to the west, the rocky wall
Of Mana's cliffs they left, and through the spray
For sad Cuhullin's home they ploughed their
way.

And as the hero sat with gloomy look
Gazing upon the land where mourned his love,
Ferkertnè without weeping scarce could brook
His bitter woe, and with sweet language strove
To soothe him, but such sorrow ne'er forsook
Its prey for kindly pleadings. Of the grove
In Mana and his heart's lost love and pride
He only thought, and smote his breast and
cried: —

“ Can I think with a heart elate
Of the looks and the smiles that won me,
While the dreadful finger of fate
With its touch of iron is on me? —
When I sleep in my grave alone
Where the terror of darkness lies,
The joy of her voice’s tone,
The glance of her love-lit eyes,
Will pierce through the earth above me, and bid me arise !
arise !

“ For the pitiless bitter wave
Of mine early doom must devour me, —
But the laurels that deck the grave
Of the valiant dead will embower me ;
And perchance in the years to come,
In the fondness of tears and sighs,
She may lean o’er my lonely tomb, —
Then up to her sobs and cries,
Through the earth and the tangled grasses, my wakened
soul will arise ! ”

Then thought flew after thought on pinions fleet
Through his wild brain, and as they darker
grew,

Despair, the obscene bird with taloned feet,
Tore at his heart, and every breath he drew
Seemed fire, until he thought how heroes meet
And fall, and then he saw the ghastly dew
Of death on him, and the black battle-crow
Perched on him on the red field lying low.

Then smote he at his breast again, and cried, —

“Is this the end of all? Alas! will she,
My love! my love! no more be at my side
In the strange land with Gods where I shall
be, —

With Gods and heroes in the angry pride
Of a forlorn heart? Alas! with me
Will she abide again? Perchance she may
Walk by my side through the eternal day!”

Now went he where the minstrel sat, and took

The harp from him, and with in-gazing eye
Drew his hand o'er the golden strings, and strook

A strain, and, as when 'mid the mountains high
An eagle questing o'er the roaring brook

Feels through his breast the archer's arrow
fly,

With dreadful voice he cries his cry of pain,
Darkening the wet gray sands with bloody stain ; —

So rose the hero's wild and fierce lament,

And the brown sailors heard it, and strong
fear

Fell on them, till the minstrel sighing went

And took his hand in his, and said, " The bier
Holds not thy loved one yet ; and discontent,

And grief, and the despair that hath no tear,
And hath no action, ne'er can win thee back
Thy love across the field that knows no track.

“Sit by me here upon the poop, and list
To this my tale of one whom, like thee now,
Misfortune, the dread hag, had wooed and kissed
And lured unto her bed, but whose bright brow
Sunlike arose from the foul vampire’s mist,
As thine will yet, when, like my hero, thou,
Not by weak grief, but deeds of valor bold,
Shalt win thy love!” And thus his tale he told :—

THE WINNING OF AMARAC.

To each man’s heart a kingdom fair is given :
Mine is girt round by lakes and silver seas
And green sky-piercing mountains thunder-riven,
With forests at their foot and flowery leas ;
And I can make that kingdom hell or heaven
As the fierce winds of passion burn and freeze,
Or the soft airs of reason waft life’s hours
On silent wings of peace through sun and showers.

Within my kingdom all things are that seem
 Before the Poet's eye : there sunny lands
Outspread in glory where bright castles gleam
 From hill-tops, and beside the golden sands
Of fairy lake, or sea, or singing stream,
 Rise palaces wherein the snowy hands
Of ladies ever young and fair as May
Weave garlands for the knights who pass the way.

And there spread fastnesses of rock and wood
 Wherein the tawny lions ramp and roar,
And the great bear stalks by the sounding flood,
 And wild deer graze the moorlands, and the
 boar
And wolf and fox, as nature made their mood,
 Come forth and show themselves, and forests
 hoar
Teem with bright birds and insects, and all things
Of Fairy haunt the brooks and bubbling springs.

And oft I see these fairy beings pass

Before mine eyes, and oft they sing to me
Sweet songs, as dancing o'er the fragrant
grass,

Flower-garlanded, in royal pageantry
They crowd some forest meadow, but, alas !

Howe'er by wood or stream I hear or see
These people of the Sid, in heart and brain
Only some echoes of their songs remain.

I walked alone within my kingdom fair

And heard them singing from the branchy
side

Of a wild wood, till the still evening air

Pulsed with their music, and the silver tide
Of a young mountain stream that wimpled there

Forgot its murmuring, and the carols died
Of birds beside the lake, that, listening
As I did, heard the Spirit People sing :—

“ O where could we, Spirits, sport in a hollow
Of vernal beauty so sweet as this,
Where two streams, meeting, in laughter kiss
And sing towards the lake, till the light winds follow,
Entranced with their music, through sun and shade,
Where flies in the first of the spring the swallow
To his flower that waits in the windy glade ?

“ Here the doves in the tall green pines are cooing,
Here the linnet sings from the gorse’s gold,
And the lark soars high o’er the morning wold,
And the cuckoo comes at the year’s renewing,
Calling from heaven, ‘ Awake ! awake !
O flowers and grass, to the South-wind’s wooing
And the soft rain’s kisses by stream and lake ! ’

“ Here springs our well of the sacred water,
Here droops o’er its crystal the Rowan-Tree
With its berries red as the red lips be
Of the bright-haired Amarac, Fiernè’s daughter,
Who sits ’neath its shadow and calls and cries,
‘ From the stricken plain, from the ridge of slaughter,
Can my love come back ? Can the dead arise ? ’ ”

Her love : — alas ! she loved a mortal knight
Who from the south and strong Tintagel
came,
Singing upon his harp the deeds of might
Wrought by his hand, and ever seeking fame
With valiant heart in tourney and in fight ;
And ladies' smiles and warriors' loud acclaim
Met him where'er he went, till one still morn
He woke from sleep 'neath Fiernè's elfin thorn.

He woke, and looking through the silver mist
In which the young dawn wraps itself enwoven
With films of gold, saw o'er him sunrise-kissed
Tall pinnacles of rock, and, earthquake-cloven,
A gorge beneath, a lake of amethyst
In the reflected light, with rocks uphoven
Like towers around its brink, save where the
dawn
Faced it, and there outspread a grassy lawn.

And on that lawn, where the sweet waters speed

Out from the lake, he saw the snowy kine

Of Amarac upon the blossoms feed

In silence, and beheld the Maid divine

Standing beside the stream in golden weed,

Watching the first red beams of morn to
shine

Upon her white-backed herd, when she and they

Would fade in mist from mortal sight away!

He looked and loved; she looked and loved him, too;

But as he rose up from his grassy bed

To clasp her to his burning heart, she knew

Her father's weird was on her, and she fled

With her white herd into the lake that, blue

Like molten sapphire, in a moment spread

O'er them, with mystic echoes sweetly ringing

Round the calm shores! But hark the Spirits'
singing!—

“To the ends of the earth

Did the noble knight wander,

And the sounds of his mirth

Were the battle-field’s thunder,

As he laughed like the Morn in her stormy attire ;

And his foemen were scattered as straw in his ire,

And he trod on their necks

And he clove them asunder

And consumed them with fire !

“But we followed him far

As his fierce passion bore him,

His moon and his star

That one image before him ;

And in safety he looked upon war’s brazen gleam,

In safety he slumbered by meadow and stream,

For we moved by his side,

And our wings fluttered o’er him,

And we calmed him in dream !

“Then we placed in his breast

The black Pearl of Sorrow,

And his passion’s unrest

Died away on the morrow,

And we soon lured him back to her mountains, to slake
His thirst in our well and her calm crystal lake,
And to talk with his soul
That its darkness might borrow
Some light for her sake !”

Once more he slept, once more he woke, and then
Rose from his grassy couch, and 'neath a tree
That drooped its branching glories by the glen,
Hid himself till the dawn rose and the lea
Showed its sward pranked with fresh flowers, and
again

Out from the depths of that small crystal sea
The snowy-backed and pink-eared cattle came
With Amara ere rose the morn's full flame.

He stept from his concealment, and besought
Her love in burning words that brought the tears
To her compassionate eyes, and gently wrought
Within her heart strange yearnings and quick
fears ;

But soon her memory stung her, and distraught

With sorrow for his mournfulness, she nears
The margent of the lake, and with her kine
Under its waters hides her head divine.

He dropt upon the grass, as one whom dead

A lance-but strikes in battle, and he lay
'Neath the tree's shadow on the moist cold bed
Of grass and flowers, until the glorious day
Reached the blue lake from the bright mountain
head ;

Then sprang he on his steed, and went his way
Through the wide world redressing sin and wrong
With harp and sword. But hark the Spirits' song!—

FIRST SPIRIT.

“Where the vapors thicken
Through the city's ways,
And the people sicken
In the poisoned blaze

Of the sun that rots the swamp,
There beside the failing lamp
Of the lowly and the stricken
He hath stood to cheer and quicken
With his harp life's dying rays !

SECOND SPIRIT.

“Where tyrants darkened the light
In the hearts of mankind
With the tortures of famine and blight
And the shackles that bind,
There his broad pennon streamed to the wind
And the weak ones arose and followed,
And the strength of the tyrants melted away,
Like the blood-red eve of a stormy day,
In the jaws of the battle swallowed !

FIRST SPIRIT.

“He turned in a waking dream
From the home of the rising morn,
Lured by her deep eyes' gleam
To the land where his love was born ;

And no doorway of joy would ope,
No cloud from his soul depart,
Till the gold-bright Pearl of Hope
We placed o'er his loving heart.
Then his harp-strings rang by the river
And his voice upswelled by the shore,
Till the leaves o'er his long plume quiver
By the stream and the lake once more."

Again he watched and waited: by his side

He held his gold-stringed harp, and stooping
stood

'Neath the embowering leaves that near the
tide

Drooped and concealed him, till the many-
hued

Young Dawn arose, and ere the rabbit spied

Her favorite bloom-beds, and the callow brood
Of the wild duck awoke, upon the mead
Came Amarak her snowy kine to feed.

And now he touched his harp, and soft and low
The strings spoke to his fingers, and anear
The kine drew in the ever-brightening glow
Of the calm dawn, while one, unknown to
fear,
The infant of the herd, with footsteps slow
Came nigher still, and stood with raptured ear,
As if she ne'er again cared to behold
The buttercups that turned her teeth to gold.

And still the sweet strings spoke, and nearer yet
To the green tree the large-eyed listener drew
With dainty footsteps that scarce seemed to fret
From the young flowers and grass the diamond
dew.

Then stooped the player ; down his harp he set
Beside the tree, and from his ambush flew
And grasped the bright-backed offspring of the morn
By one pink ear and by one budding horn !

A hurrying by the lakelet and a cry!

A sparkle in his eyes! No more, no more

He held his little captive;—with a sigh

He turned, and on the meadow's blossomed floor

His love stood near the stream-bank bright and
shy

As a young sea-gull on some sunny shore,

And spoke to him. “O love!” she said, “O love!

O dear one, well thy fealty thou dost prove!

“O dear belovèd one, I weep for thee,

I've wept and weep for thee, but not in vain,

And I will seek this spot and hallowed tree

And yearn for thee and think of all thy
pain!

But go, beloved; the Rovers of the sea

Fasten upon thy land their cruel chain;

One trial more, until thy land rejoices

At thy best deed!” But hark the Spirit voices!—

FIRST SPIRIT.

He went forth like a meteor of morning, and the rocks
felt the hoofs of his steed,
He tore through the fords of the rivers, and he furrowed
the swards with his speed,
And the lances that gathered around him were thick as
the larches that shake
In the broad shaggy woods of Bengara, when the whirl-
wind sweeps down from the lake ;
And his shout was the cry of the eagle, and his charge
was the shock of the sea
When it rolls with its tide and its tempest and swallows
the sands ; and the tree
Of his long spear uplifted his pennon like the terror of the
moon in eclipse,
Till it fluttered in the winds of his triumph and the foemen
fell back to their ships ;
But alas for the broad-barbèd arrow and its swift path of
woe through his side,
And the bowstring of fury that winged it ere the last of
the red Rovers died !

SECOND SPIRIT.

His soul soared high o'er the battle wrack,
But we hovered around her and brought her back,

Brought her back through the passage narrow,
The bitter road of the barbèd arrow,
And we opened his eyes, and he looked around
On the ruined things of the foughten ground,
And we saw in his quick-returning sense
His life's fair purpose and thought intense ;
And we scattered the clouds of his battle-sound,
And we placed her gift on his ruddy wound,
Her heart's bright treasure, all gifts above,
The rose-red Pearl of perfect love !

I hear a horse-tramp echoing from the dell !

He comes gay glittering up the ferny pass !

I see bright Amarac beside the well

Trembling, till in a gleam of gold and brass

He leaps from his strong steed ! Ah ! who can
tell

Their happiness ? The flowers amid the grass
Laughed brighter, and the birds sang by the shore
To see these lovers meet and part no more !

“What think'st thou now, O mournful one? Can
this,

Thy morn of life unclouded all glide on?

See what things happed to mar my hero's bliss,

And how with hopeful heart he fought and won,

Won even his love, — his love so sure to miss,

So hard to win! And now life's currents run

Against thee, yet keep high thy heart, and ne'er

Let black misfortune bring thee to despair!”

Next eve, with grateful heart and farewells kind,

The minstrel southward rode, and for his train

Two pages took, and three young steeds the wind

Could not outstrip, three hounds with bell and
chain,

Three hawks of Guydilod; yet in his mind

A dark unrest grew and a secret pain,

Thinking what cureless woes this love might bring

To strong Cuhullin, Blamid, and his King!

THE TAKING OF MANA.

SAID Mora in the garden, “He is gone!

But fear thou not, for in the hall to-day
As the great storm subsided, I asked one

About thy love who in the ambush lay,
And he replied, ‘Some bright God by the Sun

Sent down to earth he seemed, as in the ray
Of lightning he rushed through us, and his shout
Worse than the thunder was and storm’s wild
rout!’

“What think’st thou now of love?” Then Blanid kept

Her glance fixed on the ground awhile, and wrung
Her lovely hands, and with wild passion wept

As though her heart would burst, but from her
tongue

No answer came; while Mora nigh her crept

And kissed her cheek and said, “The bards have
sung

Thy fame throughout the world, and thinkest thou
That he’ll forget? that he forsakes thee now?

“I know not love, but yet I know fond eyes!

And each sad morn when thou from him didst part,
O mistress fair, I marked his tear-drops rise

And his great bosom heave, and saw him dart
Sweet glances back on thee; and as for sighs,

He sighed as doth the merchant for his mart
Of jewels, when ’mid wrath and pillage born
The robbers come and leave him all forlorn.

“ Who sighs like him will ne’er his love desert,
But, like my brother, when his bride he sought,
The fair Brigantian, Nera ; — as thou wert
These days she was, she loved him, till she
brought
Upon his head her father’s ire ; — begirt
For war my brother sailed the sea and fought
For love and Nera, and with sword and fire
And fifty galleys reft her from her sire.

“ So he will come and take thee, and when I,
In other days, shall grow to womanhood,
Some lovely lord with heart and courage high
May spread his sails and plough the salty flood
And win me for his bride, and when I die
May weep for me ! ” Then up the bright one
stood,
Folding the Chatterer in her fondling arms,
Half comforted and cured of love’s alarms.

And still increased her fame : on wingèd feet

Rumor danced round the world with cap and
bells,

Jangling his foolish music wild and sweet

All in her praise, from courts where empire dwells
In glory, to the babbling village street,

Casting o'er all a glamour of strange spells,
Till no man's head or heart or soul was free,
And the world bound in love's strong slavery.

Then rose throughout the lands a threatening hum,

Man's savage growl to taste forbidden fruit,
And those who in her presence erst were dumb,

Or wooed her with sweet songs of harp and lute,
Now set their passions free, — grew venturesome

With bloody sword and spear to press their
suit,

And leagued and schemed till their invading sails
Shadowed the deep and swallowed all the gales.

And like thick flocks of gulls that from afar
 Strain landward in white myriads when the storms
Out on the ocean wage their thundering war,
 From northern coasts the slant sun scarcely
 warms,
From east and west, from 'neath the southern star,
 From continent and sea-beat isle, in swarms,
With sails spread wide and pennons flying gay,
The mustering ships thronged bright Dun Dalgan's
 bay.

From far Hispanian mountain crests that lower
 Over the wallowing bay of Biscany,
Batanjos came with all his vassal power
 In twelve long galleys laboring up the sea,
His prow a Wolf, his ensign a high Tower,
 His men in armor glittering barbarously ;
Fierce were their looks and savage was their speech
Like growling of wild waves on Lora's beach.

Next from strong Gallia's shores Toutillos came
Whose conquering sword oft crossed the Roman
blade.

The heart that throbbed within his mighty frame
Was love-sick now at thought of that fair maid ;
His followers trod the decks with eyes of flame,
And flashing arms, and heavy helms arrayed
With head-skins of great beasts whose gorgon look
The weak beholder's heart with terror shook.

From where the Sea Ploughers bored the glistening
sod

For ores by toppling crags of Cornuaille,
Stout Penon came with ensign flying broad
And gilded pine-tree mast and silken sail
Phœnician-like ; the lord of Guydilod,
Mathonwy, in his plumes and painted mail,
Across the tumbling waves behind him bore
With seven tall ships from wild Brigantia's shore.

Like a fierce sea-hawk from its savage nest,
Down from the woody shores of Caledon,
Dara was there in ruffling tartans drest
With shining eagle plumes his helm upon ;
With him five chiefs the self-same amorous quest
Sought from their windy homes where billows
run

With ceaseless clamor loud before the breeze
Of Orkney and the wave-worn Hebrides.

From stern Norwegian valleys, well bedight
In armor of stout bull-hide studded o'er
With scale of brass and boss of silver bright,
Tall Broder came with nine ships, and the
shore

Resounded like strong thunder in the night,
As his fierce followers with loud uproar
Leaped from the bulwarks knee-deep in the wave,
And to the strand in long lines shouting drave.

And Erin sent her lords and chiefs of pride,
 Their valiant hearts by love's enchantment
 led,
From coasts where morn salutes Kilmantan's side,
 To Mizzen and Kinsala's ancient head ;
From west and north, to where with sunset dyed,
 Ben Borka seeks the stars o'er ocean's bed,
And inland from the mighty flood that drains
Heberian hills and Heremonian plains.

Now on the gathered ships slow fell the night,
 And the sky oped o'er earth her jewelled page,
And in Dun Dalgan's hall of festive light
 The thronging warriors met for council sage ;
Over their heads the white lamps glittered bright
 On arms that oft had stemmed the battle's
 rage,
On brazen harnesses and helms of gold
And flags and trophies of the days of old.

And fast the goblets flowed, and clear and sweet
The minstrels on their harps began to play,
While heroic poems' flowing rhythmic feet
Danced from their mouths, and many a shorter
lay
Of love was sung with heavenly joy would greet
The dullest ear, till in his bright array
Of war upstood the Gaul, Toutillos strong,
And thus in soldier's words addressed the throng:—

“Comrades! some hero must command this quest
Over us all for high achievement good,
Some man of wondrous soul whom all the rest
Can follow, and, if fate wills, wade through
blood
For honor and for love; and in my breast
On the high place one hero long hath stood,
Brighter than all by fame's effulgence lit,
Cuhullin, in whose bannered hall we sit!”

Then turned he to Dun Dalgan's lord. "To thee,
Strongest of heroes, prince of high renown,
And topmost flower of valor's stately tree,
I give my voice, and droop my pennon down ;
Her father was thy dead sire's enemy,
Then do thou lead, and bright success shall
crown
Our enterprise !" And through the echoing hall
Assent the heroes shouted one and all.

Now stately rose Cuhullin : " O brave peers,
I may not say ye nay, the more that I
Have seen her, that these glad, enraptured ears
Heard her delightful voice in days gone by ;
But ere we win her, many a grove of spears
And many a man and cloven shield shall
lie
Along the smoking breaches as we cross
With victor feet her castle's circling fosse ! "

And so it fell that ere the jewels red

That deck Dawn's golden sandals lit the
sky,

Raising the anchors from their oozy bed

The sailors their strong cables 'gan to ply.

And as the sun upraised his burning head

Over the bulging waves, afar and nigh,
Scattered along the breezy waters free,
The great fleet sailed for Mana of the Sea.

Deep in a vale the Hold of Mana stood,

Where many a dell with falling streamlets rang,
Where trees their blossomy raiments from each
wood

Flaunted, and all day long the wild-birds sang ;
Yet not so far from Ocean's restless flood

But one might smell the salt and hear the clang
Of sea-birds and the muffled sound of waves
Rumbling in hollow thunder through the caves.

Far other sounds that castle soon shall hear
Than songs of birds and murmurs of sweet
streams,
From iron rams' rock-splintering, ponderous gear,
From catapults' loud-clashing chains and beams ;
Yet little does the old King fret or fear,
But sits from day to day like one in dreams
Of great exploits and actions to be done
When the strong leaguer draws his hold upon.

What should he fear within his lordly hold,
Through middle air by magic might uphurled,
Built by his foresire, Mananan, of old,
A wonder and a glory to the world?
Three giant walls its broad girth did enfold,
Three shining fosses like great serpents
curled
Between them, by three brazen bridges spanned,
With brazen gates wrought by no earthly hand.

'Tween the two outward fosses and high walls
Laughing in light the lovely garden spread,
One fair expanse of bloom, with waterfalls
And singing runnels from the fountain fed ;
There lived no noisome thing that creeps or crawls,
There glad birds sang with notes would wake
the dead,

And flowers of every clime and every hue
In nurtured bed or glade of wildness grew.

High o'er the towered walls twelve faces bright
To the green woods that castle did display,
Whereon the figures of the Months were dight
With cunning art in wonderful array ;—
There was chill January clad in white,
And February sullen, cold and gray,
And March would through the budding green-
woods go,
A blustering boy with bright face all aglow.

There April stepped the daisied pastures through

In azure gown with girlish smile most sweet,

Pale pansies, primroses, and violets blue

Sprang up where'er she set her dainty feet ;

And May, her laughing sister, — seemed she
flew

Over the spangled meads in joy to greet

Bright June, the lovely queen of all the flowers,

Enthroned amid her ever-blooming bowers.

And there was strong July, the lusty swain,

Knee-deep amidst the new-mown meadow grass,

And August, jolly farmer, on his wain

Of golden corn by orchards ripe did pass,

One hand upon the poppy-wreathèd rein,

One beckoning to a brown-cheeked country
lass,

Buxom September, bright-eyed, rose-lipped, clad

In russet not too gay and not too sad.

Next like the remnant of a kingly man

October 'mid the brown woods brooding came ;
Him followed, as though 'neath some withering ban,
November sour, a wrinkled spitfire dame,
Then he whose steps had reached life's farthest
span,

Hoary December, wheezing, hobbling, lame,
Bent double o'er his crutch and very lean,
And all but dead from palsy, pains, and spleen !

High towering o'er these wondrous imageries

Shot up a world of gilded dome and vane,
Pinnet and fretted roof, like phantasies
That run at full moon through a madman's
brain ;

And could you through its crystal galleries

And golden halls and bowers hear fitting strain,
One long-drawn dream of glory none could tell
Would hold you many an hour beneath its spell !

Within the garden on the fragrant grass

Sat Blanid with her bower-maid at the noon
Of a still day, and made the fond hours pass

With talk of love, the ever-living boon
Of the almighty Gods, that yet, alas!

Oft treads upon our souls with angry shoon ;
And Blanid said, "I know, howe'er it be,
That some great horror now approacheth me !

"Rumor is busy now, and tells his tale

This way and that, how 'cross the heaving brine
For Mana's shore each ship of war doth sail

That e'er was built ; and what joy can be mine,
Well knowing that ev'n here shall rise our wail

Some day for my sire's loss, that we shall
pine

Captives of some dread lord whose looks shall
lower

And slay us as the east wind slays the flower ? "

“What fearest thou,” said Mora, “of thy doom?”

The minstrels sing thy lover’s praises loud ;
One look from his kind eyes will chase the
gloom

That chills thy heart. Remember ye are vowed
Soul unto soul forever. He will come,

And, like the royal eagle from the cloud
’Midst little hawks contending for the prey,
He ’ll swoop and bear thee to his home away !”

But nathless Blamid wept, and in her grief

Asked for the lute, and said, “To yonder
dell

Go thou and bring me dewy flower and leaf

Of roses, that unwitnessed I may tell
Some thoughts unto my love, for no reprieve

My heart has in his absence !” By the well
She sat alone, her blue eyes filled with tears,
And sang unto her love her hopes and fears :—

SONG.

“ I walk in dreams ’mid heavenly hills,
I hear the music of their rills,
Their wild-birds sing, their zephyrs play,
In greenwoods of eternal May.

“ I see their morn and sunset gleams
Far glittering over lakes and streams,
Where happy spirits born to love
Disport by fragrant bank and grove.

“ Amidst those spirits everywhere,
By lake and stream and forest fair,
With gladsome heart, with sweet surprise,
I see thee and thy smiling eyes.

“ And as I feel thy radiant glance,
My fears retreat, my hopes advance,
The hemlock, grief, hath lost its bane,
The rose of joy is mine again.

“ Then oh ! perchance these visions come
As messengers from some fair home,
Some world of bliss and constancy
Bright after death for you and me !”

“O love! O love!” she cried, “couldst thou stand
by us

On the dark day of doom that comes so fast,
In glorious wage of war the world might try us
And reap defeat and ruin, and, aghast
With terror at thy hand of valor, fly us,
But ah! my sire, relentless to the last!
He will not see my tears, or hear thy suit,
But thirsts for vengeance and war's bitter fruit!”

By this young Mora from the dell of flowers
Came with one hand beneath her robe, and said,
“I've roamed and searched around the white-rose
bowers

But found none fit for thee, nor through the red :
At last I reached a sward of sun and showers
Whereshone these lovely blooms I brought instead,
These gems that deck the garden's fairy spots,
Wild hyacinths and sweet forget-me-nots.”

And then she bared her nimble hand and laughed,
And, holding up the flowers, said, "Here they
are !

These blue-bells, in the gentle poet's craft
Emblems of constancy, and, dearer far,
These beautiful forget-me-nots that quaffed
The cool dew when the blinking morning star
Rose o'er the hill ! Here, take them, and be sure
As that thou'lt kiss them his love will endure !"

And Blanid took the flowers and in their bloom
Buried her rosy mouth. "Ah ! well I see,"
Then Mora cried, "how thy bright eyes illumine
One for remembrance, one for constancy !
But sit thee down. No more of grief and gloom !
Give me the lute and I will sing to thee
The song that Tiernan made for me and taught
me
With the first bright forget-me-nots he brought me !

FORGET ME NOT.

“The East Wind sprang into a lovely place,
And cried, ‘I’ll slay the flowers and leave no trace
Of all their blooming in this happy spot !’
And, as before his breath the sweet flowers died,
One little bright-eyed blossom moaned and cried,
‘O woods ! forget me not ! forget me not !’

“‘O woods of waving trees ! O living streams !
In all your noontide joys and starry dreams,
Let me, for love, let me be unforgot !
O birds that sing your carols while I die,
O list to me ! O hear my piteous cry !
Forget me not ! alas ! forget me not !’

“And the Gods heard her plaint and swept away
The bitter-fanged, strong East Wind from his prey,
And smiled upon the flower and changed her lot,
So now that, as we mark her azure leaf,
We think of life and love and parting grief,
And sigh, ‘Forget me not ! forget me not !’”

And thus the hours were passed, while to their shore

Over the waters wide the ships drew near,

Propelled by favoring wind and sturdy oar

And thronged with valiant hearts that knew not
fear,

Plying, as to some stricken field of gore

The prey-birds haste from rocks and deserts drear,

With hungry eyes and eager wings outspread,

To raven and to batten on the dead !

'Mongst wonders told by hardy sailor folk

Who from hot climes their way of peril win,

Some monstrous spider, just as morn has broke,

O'er a cave's mouth his treacherous web doth
spin,

To wrap round robber wasps the fatal yoke,

And flies and gilded gnats to catch therein,

So sat the old King in his halls and planned

Death to the coming raiders of his land !

At length it happed that, as one morn he chose
To view his manned walls, with sour look and
fell

He saw the glancing banners of his foes
Rising and falling with the ocean swell
Over the bay, and, as next morn arose,
From clouds of dust that choked the forest
dell

Flashed hostile sword and helm and bright cuirass
And many an iron spear and shield of brass !

And like some orient grove that all in bloom
Nods its tall blossoms to the swaying breeze,
With myriad mantles gay, with crest and plume,
With fluttering flags and war's best braveries,
Emerging from the dusky valley's womb,
From forest path and pass, his enemies
Over the open meads, far shining, wound,
Encompassing his stronghold round and round !

Ere the hot sun had set, their ordered camp,
White tent and silk pavilion, gleamed like gold
Smit by his rays, and tramp re-echoed tramp
Of sentinels around the glittering wold ;
And on the castle walls, when rose night's lamp,
Her silvery rays glimmered with radiance cold
On swords and spear-points thick as autumn
corn
Ready for fight and waiting for the morn.

And when the next sun's life-inspiring rays
Smote the moist meads and dried the pearly dew,
A herald, his gay tabard all ablaze
With broideries rich, slow toward the castle
drew
And halted nigh the fosse, his fearless gaze
Bent on the foe awhile ; then shrilly blew
His trumpeter three warning blasts, and then
He spoke his message unto Mana's men.

Prompt to the message came the thundering clang
Of a great arblast's chain, and then down bore
A bolt that through the bright air whizzed and
sang,

And nigh their feet the sunny greensward tore ;—
High o'er the grass the trumpeter upsprang
And turned his back and fled in panic sore,
The haughty herald pacing slow behind
With stately step and unperturbèd mind !

Whereat, along the weapon-bristling walls
Pealed a great laugh that made the valleys ring,
And from the camp uprose the captains' calls,
With clash of arms and noise of marshalling,
Till from the forest's sunny intervals
Out rushed the hosts in long lines glittering,
With shout and threatening clang, and many a
note

Defiant from the trumpet's brazen throat.

Then javelins sang their death-songs as they flew
With sharp, shrill clangor swift from foes to
foes,
And clouds of feathered darts obscured the blue,
Huge engines thundered and great cries arose ;
And louder and more wild the clamor grew,
As when a storm at morn begins and blows
With gathering fury, till, ere night's dull shade,
The tall trees of the forest low are laid.

So fought they, till the broad fosse deep and calm
Was bridged with dead, and o'er that weapon-gored
And ghastly ridge, the incessant thundering ram
A yawning breach through the outward ballium
bored :

Then towering o'er his men, as towers a palm
O'er the tall forest-trees, Dun Dalgan's lord
Shouted his battle-cry, and with firm tread
The fierce assault o'er the red ruin led.

High were their valiant hearts as they rushed in
And planked the second fosse with small delay,
Haling between them the remorseless gin

That through the second ballium tore its way;
Then rose above the high walls such a din
As thunder makes, when on an autumn day
The trembling wanderer hears its earthquake tone
Rattling behind the ridgy hills of stone.

Hard fought the heroes in that bold attack

With all that men could do of bravery :
Twice were they driven the bloody breaches back,
Thrice inward drave as rolls Toth's plunging
sea

'Tween Skerry's Rocks, and with hearts nothing
slack

Of valiance, breast to breast, and knee to knee,
Fighting they held the vantage they had won,
Till on the turmoil sank the blood-red sun.

As a young vestal with the sacred flame

Lights the gemmed arches of some temple dome,
The moon from pearl-bright bowers then upward
came,

Flooding the heavens with light as on she clomb :
On hills and lakes and woods she writ her name,
Queen of repose, and her calm smiles brought home
Quiet to marshalled camp and guarded hold,
Till Morn awoke and shook her locks of gold.

Then rose again the clang, the shout, the cry

Of war from inward fosse and outward pale,
And fast again the arrowy showers did fly

From twanging bows thick as the rattling hail
From thundering cloud and lightning-litten sky,

And shields were split, and riven breast and
mail

Gave forth the souls of heroes, till the night

Lowered o'er the woods, and still the clamorous fight

Raged round the castle with redoubled roar

Through all the long and lonesome hours of dark,
As roll Moyle's wallowing billows on the shore

Mixed with the mariners' cries ; and still their
mark

The axe and red glaive made of steaming gore

On many a hero's front, until the lark
Sang his thin song from heavenly meadows sweet
Bright with the radiance of Dawn's rosy feet.

And still the battle raged. Of great deeds done

By strong Toutillos, Penon, and their peers
What need to tell ? How Mana's heroes won
High names of bright renown for after years ;
How from the clashing catapults out spun

The whizzing bolts through groves of splintering
spears,

Till the hot noon, when th' inner ballium broke
Before the cruel ram's earth-shaking stroke.

Then, as Dun Dalgan's lord prepared to cross,
Beside the breach rose an unearthly sound
From a huge wheel gray with ten centuries' moss
That now 'gan turning slowly round and round,
Until the weeds and waters of the fosse
With ever-growing speed it churned and ground,
While round the echoing walls the watchword
ran
Of "Gaily speed thy wheel, O Mananan!"

For there 'twas set in ages long gone by
By Mananan, the Ruler of the sea,
With many a magic rite the wall anigh,
Better than stone a triple fence to be,
And thus within they raised their triumph cry
To Mananan, and clashed their shields in glee
To see the wheel's tremendous vans below
Smite the red fosse with many a sounding
blow ;—

To see the broad fosse once as smooth as glass
Driven in a tide no mortal power could stay,
That almost choked the shuddering bridge of
brass

With whirling watery torrents white with
spray !

It was a stream no living wight could pass,
And thus, as smote the sun's retiring ray
In red effulgence upon land and main
The heroes met for council once again.

With fierce eyes full of baffled rage and care
And burning heart each hero told his need,
Till all had spoken, yet no man would dare
To tempt the magic tide's devouring speed ;
Then 'midst them suddenly were they aware
Of a tall warrior clad in brazen weed,
Whose voice from out his hollow helmet broke
Like a strong torrent's rumbling as he spoke : —

“O valiant ones ! the yawning breach is red
 With many a brave man's blood, but all in
 vain,
For o'er the whirling moat may no man tread,
 The castle's shield of safety and your bane !
Yet here am I, and by my father's head,
 And by the Sun and Wind, I swear to gain
Your passage to the hold, if you decree
The brightest jewel there my choice to be !

“See ye this magic spear ? With its strong
 aid
 Can we alone the castle overthrow ;
By a great Danaan smith of old 'twas made
 With many a potent spell against the foe
And one against its master : —when its blade
 Is raised to strike, and strikes not a sure blow,
Stayed by one thrill of fear, it hath the charm
To wither for a moon the coward arm.

“Then first at morn when the red sunbeams spring
O'er the whale's restless home, again fall on,
For I would hear the bolts of iron swing
From the strong arblasts, and the shout and
groan
Of heroes, and the rattling javelins ring
On the hard mail, and crash of falling stone
From the high walls the earth around me shake,
To swell this heart such deed to undertake!”

And so it was: and as the earth was dight
By the glad Morn in robes of pearl and gold,
The great sun's eye unblinking saw the fight
Rage once again around that stubborn hold:
And myriad deeds were done of matchless
might

In that stern fray, and myriad heroes bold
Slept the long glorious slumber of the brave
Beneath their earthen mounds by Mana's wave.

There many a man's dim closing eye was cast
In wonder at the strange Knight's glittering
form,

His spear-shaft sloped, like a tall galley's mast
Bent slantwise by the buffets of the storm,
As with grim frowning brows and footsteps fast
Along the breach with heroes' heart-blood warm,
'Mid showers of bolts and darts, like Crom the God
Of Thunder, toward the magic wheel he trod.

Now paused he for a space and looked, when,
lo!

Between him and the fosse erstwhile so near,
There spread a stricken war-field, where the glow
Fell lurid upon broken sword and spear;
And from a reedy marsh a javelin's throw
Upon his right crept forth a thing of fear,
A serpent vast, with crested head, and coils
Would crush ten battle chargers. Like the spoils

Of a great city gleamed his spotted back

As from the trembling reeds his volumes rolled,
Wide spread, approaching o'er the tangled wrack

Of battle, his bright head now flashing gold,
Now red, now green, now sapphire. On his track
The hero stood in wrath, and with firm hold
Raised high the spear that from his right hand sped
Down crashing through the monster's burnished
head.

As he plucked forth his spear and still strode on,
Out from behind a heap of slain there rose
A dreadful beast with eyes that gleamed and
shone

In fury, like the eyes of one of those
Twin Dragons of the Strife that ever run
Beside the feet of Bava when she goes
From the bright Mount of Monad with the brand
Of war far flaring in her armed hand.

So flashed the beast's wild eyes, while o'er the dead

He rushed to meet his foe ; as he drew nigh

Uprose the glittering shaft and spear-point dread

And then shot forth, and 'mid the fire-bright
eye

Pierced him through brain and body, on the bed

Of war transfixing him ; then rising high

The hero loosed his spear, and 'mid the slain

Left him still writhing, and strode forth again.

And, as he went, there rose at every rood

Some monster dire his onward course to stay

To the dread wheel, but through the demon brood

He fearless broke, until before him lay

A river whirling by of streaming blood.

Shouting he plunged therein, and made his
way

Up the far bank, and raising high his spear

Strode onward still across that field of fear.

Then rose from off the blood-stained fern a
shape

Tall, threatening, with a crown upon his head,
Bright clad in gold and brass from heel to nape
Of sturdy neck, and with a mantle red
Wind-blown, that let the dazzling flashes 'scape
Of the strong mail, as now with onward tread
He strode, and raised his giant arm in wrath,
To the great wheel to stop the hero's path ;—

The hero who, now pausing, looked, and there
Under the crown saw his dead father's face
Approaching with fell frowning, ghastly stare
Against him : yet no whit the hero's pace
Was checked thereat ;— on high his spear he bare
And pierced the Phantom's breast, and all the
place

Was empty now, and by the fosse's marge
He felt the mortal arrows smite his targe.

Then stood he like a tower and poised his spear,
And lightning-like the fateful weapon flung,
And lodged it in the wheel's loud-roaring gear,
Firm fixed in the huge plank whereon 'twas
hung ;—

No more the fosse whirled round with tide of fear,
No more the magic engine thundering rung :
Still as a frozen mill-wheel now it lay,
And through the last breach open was the way.

No minstrel's tongue, or taught in heaven or hell,
Whate'er of pearls of price his harp adorn,
Howe'er his fingers touch the strings, could tell
The great deeds done upon that far-famed morn ;
How amid heaps of slain the old King fell,
How to the wood the Bloom-bright One forlorn
And her fair maids were brought forth from the
hold,
With all the treasures of bright gems and gold.

THE TEARS OF BLANID.

THERE spread a lovely glade all cool and still

Three javelin casts beyond the outer wall,
Where bloomed their seasons wild-rose, daffodil,

Fresh daisy, hyacinth, and foxglove tall,
And many another flower at Nature's will :

And there she stood, the sweetest flower of
all,

The Bloom-bright One, that eve, her maids amid,
The glory of her eyes by tears half hid.

There in barbaric splendor o'er the green
 Were strewn the spoils from stubborn Mana
 won,
Broad golden bowls up-filled with sapphires sheen
 And diamonds that once in beauty shone
On brow of Indian maid, or dusky queen
 Of realms that burn 'neath Afric's blinding sun,
And chalices with pearls filled to the lips,
Brought thitherward by wandering Tyrian ships.

And there gleamed piles of linkèd armor gay,
 And helms with crests that shone like yellow
 fire,
And plumes of that strange bird old legends say
 Springs to new life from its own burning pyre,
And wondrous bucklers brought from far Cathay,
 And bright stuffs from the golden looms of Tyre,
Baldricks and gilded torques and costly rings,
And jewelled swords fit for the sons of kings,

And drinking cups with carven slender stems,
Dishes of gold, and fairy baskets wrought
Of pearl and silver filled with emerald gems
Whose least would make ten misers' souls distraught,
And opals upon quaint old diadems,
And rubies on huge crowns of splendor brought
By Mananan from many a royal head
Of kingdoms by the sea long swallowèd.

Now on them from the reddening western skies
The sun shone and a blaze of glory made,
Ten thousand gnats and glistening dragon-flies
And glowing moths seemed circling round the
glade,
And lizards' backs and myriad serpents' eyes
Tremulous to gleam by fern and grassy blade,
And all men wondered as they stood around
To see such treasures spread on mortal ground.

Amid these priceless hoards young Blanid stood
With all her lovely bower-maids weeping sore,
Her cloak fallen at her feet, her Tyrian hood
Thrown back, her gown's blue radiance rippled o'er
By her bright silken hair, a tawny flood
That almost reached the smooth glade's emerald
floor,
Where glanced the white pearls on her broidered shoon
Like silver-glistening dew-drops 'neath the moon.

And round the glade, leaning on their long spears,
Stood the great knights, the marrers of her mirth,
Who looked on her as though with doubts and
fears
That her bright beauty had no mortal birth ;
For, nathless her keen sorrow and her tears,
The red of all the roses of the earth
Seemed on her lips, and in her eyes the blue
Of all the violets that since Adam grew.

Advanced beyond the throng and towering high
Stood he whose might the magic wheel did
tame,

With spear in hand, the lightning of his eye
From his barred helmet glinting like a flame,
As drew Dun Dalgan's mighty lord anigh
And spoke aloud : "O knight without a name,
To whom we owe the castle's mastery,
Choose now thy jewel, whatsoe'er it be !"

Then strode he forth and laid his armèd hand
Upon the shrinking shoulder of the maid : —
"I choose," he said, "this flower of all the land,
This priceless gem in beauty's garb arrayed ;
And if there be amongst this soldier band
A lord or prince of honor so unstaid
As now to say me nay, then I stand here
To prove my well-won right with shield and
spear !"

There fell a surly silence on the throng,
And all their valiant hearts grew cold as stone,
Their knightly promise pledged, or right or wrong,
To make the loveliest jewel there his own ;
Wistful they stood and grieved, until erelong
Burst from their laboring breasts a bitter groan
Like the hoarse grumbling of the storm's last
breeze
Dying amid the sturdy forest-trees.

What recked they now of gems and stores of gold
But as poor gauds worthless in all men's eyes,
As from their midst they saw the hero bold
Through the green glades bear off the glorious
prize,
With her bower-maids, her foster-mother old,
And a stout varlet of her house ? The skies
Darkened apace, and the sun left them there
Dumb as the hollow night in their despair.

The moon and stars shone bright on Mana's bay,
The winds were still, the drowsy sailors slept,
And all the mighty fleet in silence lay,
When from the shadow that the huge rocks kept
Over a little inlet bore away
The galley of the Nameless Knight, and swept,
With brawny arms and hands to ply the oar,
Towards Borka's blue-bright peaks from Mana
shore.

Over its royal deck were all things strewn
Fit for his weeping prize to rest upon,
Gemmed seats carved o'er with many an ancient rune,
Footstools, Ulidian webs of saffron lawn,
Thick cloths of gold, the Persian's gorgeous boon,
Gay Tyrian shawls that with strange brilliance
shone,
And Norland furs, and tawny lions' hides
From the brown burning tracts that Nile divides.

Amidst them in her tameless agony

Prone on the deck long lay the Bright One
low,

And yet no sighs would come her breast to free,

No tears to lighten her sad weight of woe ;
At length she sat her up, and piteously

Crept nigh her foster dame, and to and fro
Rocked herself, moaning like a wounded hind
In a wild forest far from all mankind !

Then Mora crept anigh. “ O child and friend ! ”

Said Blanid, “ now our night of life’s begun,
Our misery without a change or end ;—

Where now are those kind Gods whose smiles
we won

With prayers ? Where now to shelter and defend

The helpless ? While our hearts’ sad currents run,
No more, no more they’ll smile on us, and give
The sweet joys back that made life worth to live !

“ No more, no more my father’s face we’ll see,
Smiling farewell at night ; alas ! no more
Shall his fond arms of love be clasped round me
For morning’s welcome ; in the breach of gore
He lies with stiffened hand, the enemy
In piles around him heaped, his banner tore,
His bright sword broken, and his nobles all
Stretched stark beside him o’er red breach and
wall.

“ And my belovèd one, who with my sire
Shared all my heart, woe, woe for me and him !
No more where laughs the foxglove’s gay attire
By the woodside we’ll meet. Destruction grim
Hath plunged my native land in war’s hot mire
Of blood ! And now her fading shores grow
dim ! ” —

And down the Bright One fell, and, lying prone,
Kept muttering to herself her parting moan : —

“ Farewell to thee, Mana beloved !
Forlorn as thou art !
Too well was thy valiance proved,
Dear home of my heart !
No more shall thy halls of glory
Sound to the harp and flute ;
Still, still is the minstrel's story,
And the voice of the bard is mute.

“ Farewell to thee, Mana beloved !
Alas ! and alas !
Where the feet of my girlhood roved,
From the tangled grass
In my desolate place of roses
The grim, gray wolf doth whine,
And the bat 'mid the leaves reposes
In the bowers that once were mine.

“ Farewell to thee, Mana beloved !
To thy guest-halls bright,
Where the fingers of minstrels moved
Unto sounds of delight !
Farewell to thy vale and forest,
Thy cincture of sea-waves green,
And the mantle of joy thou worest
In the happy days that have been ! ”

Again crept Mora to her, whispering,

“What ails thee, dearest? Raise thy heart and
cry

Unto the Gods! Perchance thy voice will bring

Upon our hapless state their kindly eye!

Bethink thee of the fair ones whom the wing

Of fortune flapped in anger! Did they die

In their first black despondency? Ah, no!

They lived to see joy ending all their woe!

“Think of fair Etain’s fortunate return

To her fond lover’s arms from Midir’s land,

Of young Fingalla and the Fairy Urn,

Of Enna on the Sea isle, and of Fand,

The princess who made many a brave heart
burn,

Neim, Fea, and Fininda of the strand, —

She lived to see her sorrows pass away

And marry three good husbands in her day!

“ Arise, O darling of my heart ! arise !

A mother I will prove to thee ere long
Far better than thy foster-dame, though wise

Tenfold she looks there by the bulwark strong
Sitting and gazing on us ! Lift thine eyes

And kiss me, dearest ! Woe and bitter wrong
May crush thee, yet, than me, thou’lt never
find

A mother, sister, friend, more fond and kind ! ”

But still no softening tears her eyes would bless,

Till rose a light wind on the silver sea
Singing amidst the sails : then her distress

Seemed as a thing far off, and dreamily
All things grew mixed, as in her weariness

She laid her bright head on her fosterer’s
knee

And slept till morning broke, then up she sat

And moaned again, but yet no comfort gat.

And merrily hummed its song the galley's prore
As fast it clave the blue sea's glassy plain,
And through a winding inlet neared a shore
Whose sunny woods smelt fresh from recent
rain.

Thereon they disembarked ; then seaward bore
The lordly galley o'er the waves again,
Till far away sank down its tall mast's stem,
And left the Nameless Knight alone with them.

There spread a lovely bank 'twixt wave and wood
Prankt o'er with sea-pink and blue violet,
And there she sat a space in vacant mood
And saw the flowers with hard eyes still un-
wet ;

Then a fond memory came and brought the blood
Into her cheeks, and then a fierce regret
For her lost home and all her happy years
Burned in her heart, but yet she shed no tears !

Like to a startled, mournful mountain erne
That sees its only fledgling droop and die,
And flaps her wings and screams along the
fern,

The foster-dame looked in that haggard eye
With melting mother's heart that sore did yearn,
Then clapped her hands and raised a woful cry
Of sorrow, as one wails above the dead,
But still no answering tears young Blanid shed !

Whereat the great Knight smote his sounding shield
With deafening clang, and raised his voice
aloud,

And from the shelter of the leafy weald
A tall squire led a war-horse prancing proud
With brass-shod hoofs adown the flowery field,
And head-plumes glancing like a tawny cloud,
And jangling rein and red caparison,
And glittering selle a King might sit upon.

And after him another squire there came
 Leading an ambling palfrey white as snow,
Fit for some princess or imperial dame, —
 With archèd neck and stately pace and slow,
With many a gem its bridle bright aflame,
 With pearls of price its saddle all aglow,
Its housings azure silks and cloth of gold,
A wonder and heart-gladness to behold !

Then other squires came forth with many steeds,
 Varlets with sumpter mules, and everything
That thirst might yearn for, or that hunger
 needs,

 In depths of woods and far-off journeying ;
And soon the bank's green grass and flowery
 weeds

 Smelt of the sweet repast, and in a ring
Sat they around, maids, foster-dame, and squire,
And feasted there to each one's heart's desire,

Save the bright Maid. Listless and sad she ate
Her bitter crust without a sob or sigh,
As one who dreams some doom all desolate
Holds her in thrall she knows not where or
why ;

Then strong Ferkertnè took his harp and sate
Before her, and awoke with fervor high
A melody would raise one from the tomb
To melt her heart, but yet no tears would come !

Whereat Ferkertnè whispered, " O thou flower
Of constant womanhood, another strain
May strike thy heart ! One day in wildwood
bower

I heard the man thou lovest sore complain,
Singing to thee, as though by some God's power
Thou wert beside him, while beyond the main
In Mana's halls thou wert ! His words I'll sing
To ope thy laden heart, thy tears to bring :—

SONG.

“When the winds in the wood are still,
And the lake sleeps calm in the hollow,
And the moon pours over the hill
Her light upon glade and tree,
I sit by the sparkling rill
And my thoughts the fleet waves follow
Like the flight of the early swallow
To the summer of love and thee.

“In the sapphire and rose of dawn
When the lark from his nest is springing,
And the dappled deer and the fawn
Come down to the wood-stream’s shore,
I stand on the dew-bright lawn,
And list to the skylark’s singing,
And think of thy sweet voice bringing
Its thrill to my heart once more.

“When the west is purple and red
With the glory of sunset dying,
And the waves to the sky outspread
In the tremulous splendors burn,

I stray by the ocean bed,
The sea-birds around me flying,
And think in my sadness, sighing,
Of the hours that will ne'er return.

“ In the flight of the wingèd hour,
In the changing of moon and season,
The seed upsprings in the flower,
And the flower 'neath the cold blast dies : —
There is change in the Sun-God's power,
There is death in the wind's unreason, —
In a woman's heart is there treason?
Is there falsehood in woman's eyes?

“ I prayed to the Gods at noon
That thou wouldst not hate or fear me, —
I asked of the Gods a boon
And they answered mine eager cry,
For a Voice in the wind of June
It answered that thou dost hear me,
That thou in thy thoughts art near me
However the hours flit by ! ”

Still stubborn sat the Bright One, into space
Looking as though some dreadful shape up-
sprang

Before her, blotting out the sunny place
With its black shadow as the minstrel sang;
Then hid she 'tween her hands her troubled face,
Stricken like orchard flowers that listless hang
When the frosts come and th' East's pernicious wind
Blows on their bloom and leaves no life behind !

But when the war-horse pranced with joyous neigh
Of pleasure at the moving melody,
Up sat she, looking on his harness gay,
And mused awhile, and then fond memory
Brought back to her bruised heart the happy
day,

When 'mid the forest's sunny glades and free
Rode up her heart's beloved on such a steed
And slew the great bull in her hour of need.

Then, as an April morn awakes all red

With blushes bright, to end in glistening showers,
The crimson from her heart her cheeks o'erspread,

Her breast heaved, and she dropt amid the flowers
And swooned awhile, then woke and raised her
head,

Like the young Moon within her silver bowers.
And torn with grief and racked with many fears,
She wept but got no comfort from her tears !

Then heavy trouble fell on Ferkertnè,

He knew not why, but as he gazed on her
Strange voices whispered to him, "Thou art he
That lovest her the best !" and thoughts would
stir

Within his brain and through his strong heart flee,
Shaking him as the hill-wind shakes the fir,
As mournfully he sat there till the sound
And bustling for departure echoed round.

Soon mounted they, and 'mid the forest green
Went downward through the breezy perfumed
dells,
And sweetly the strong-towering trunks between
Came back the tinkling of the palfrey's bells
On the light wind, while flashed the sunlight sheen
From spears and swords and fluttering pennoncel
And caps and plumes and braveries golden gay,
Till through the wild-woods south they passed away.

THE HUNTING OF THE WOLF OF
BIERNA.

O LOVE! O love! Ofttimes a bitter guest,
Ofttimes a golden joy without a stain,
Lord of hard grief, of anger and unrest,
Gift-giver of bright pleasure after pain ;
O thou whose breath warmeth the hardened breast
As wintry frosts by spring's sweet winds and
rain,
There's blood upon thine arrows warm and red !
And why art thou with vengeance still unfed ?

For where erstwhile thy sunny garden grew
 A pleasaunce of delight naught seemed to chill,
Decked with all flowers that ever drank the dew,
 Vocal with bird and breeze and singing rill,
Now nothing meets thy mournful victim's view
 But desert sand and rock and fierce-browed
 hill,
Naked and grim, with clouds of gloom o'erspread
Pouring misfortune's rain upon his head !

With heart forlorn his galley's deck he trode
 And sailed the sea to high Dun Dalgan's hall ;
Nor long within its chambers he abode,
 But with sweet hopes all changed to bitter
 gall,
And sorrow darkening his lonely road,
 He sought the hills, that song of waterfall
And breeze within the wood and wild-birds' strain
Might wake to gladness his sad heart again.

But though the wild-birds sang their sweetest lays,
 Though all the forest flowers bloomed in their
 prime,

And the sweet winds beneath the summer rays
 Played 'mid the whispering leaves their lulling
 chime,

Though many a brooklet down the greenwood maze
 Danced in blithe gladness, yet nor change nor time
Could end his care or lighten his sad woe,
Howe'er the birds might sing or breezes blow !

One day as he rode downward through a glen
 Whose sparkling stream made music as he sped,
He came on hurrying groups of armed men
 Marching along the winding path that led
Around a rock-encircled gloomy fen
 Unto a village green, whereon, adread
Of something strange they halted, each one's hand
Grasping with nervous grip the spear or brand.

And there the priests were from the neighboring
shrine,

The villagers around them, young and old,
Who, when they saw Cuhullin's harness shine
Anear them with its links of brass and gold,
Knew him for their own prince, and as strong wine
Makes the faint-hearted oftentimes overbold,
His presence raised their hearts, and boisterously
They shouted like the roaring of the sea.

Then one came nigh and said, "O prince and
lord

Of this our land and home, the Gods at last
Take pity on our state, with one accord
Sending thee to us, and our woe is past
When thou, O hero ! helpst. By the ford
Of Bierna, where the black flood hurries fast
Out of the fen, there dwells a monster dire
Whose wrath consumes us like a forest fire !

And how he came we know not, but one day

The birds sat still in garden, grove, and wood,
Till the dark night fell, then each branch and
spray

Resounded with a weird, alarming flood
Of music from their throats ; and when the gray
Of Morn came, a great storm-cloud red as blood
Rose in the east, and down the glen there bore
Seven ravens with their long beaks dripping gore.

And then the storm came rending sky and earth,

And a thick darkness with it, and the flame
Of lightning split in its demoniac mirth

Yon sacred tree, and from the ford there
came

Roaring a monstrous wolf, that ne'er had birth

Save from the nether Gods without a name,
And into my fair brother's cottage burst
And slew him, child and wife, with jaws accurst !

And since each night he rushes from his lair,
Slaying both child and man ; and shield and
spear

Seem naught against him, and the young and fair
Sweet morsels are to him, and thus we fear,
O prince ! his vengeance fell, though trembling care
Will leave our doubting hearts now thou art here
To rid us of the pest ; but hark the moan
Of the bereaved ones for their joys o'erthrown !”

FIRST PRIEST.

The Pest of the Fiends hath won us,
The Bringer of woe is nigh,
No friendly Gods smile on us,
Or list to our wail and cry !
Our word is the foam that flashes
Down the torrent, to fade and pass,
Our prayers are but dust and ashes,
Our wish is the withered grass !

SECOND PRIEST.

He was born by the fen's black mirror,
The offspring of Doom and Hate,
He was cradled in the cave of Terror,
And nursed at the dugs of Fate !
We chatter with fear, like sparrows
When the adder stirs by the wall,
For our threats are as pointless arrows
'Gainst the thews of his strength to fall ;
And we pray with the hate hate nurses
Till our vision with rage is dim,
And our mouths foam over with curses
To wither him, heart and limb ;
But some fiend of the fiends hath fenced him,
Hath strengthened him, fang and claw,
And our curses are naught against him,
And our prayers are but chaff and straw !

CHIEF OF THE VILLAGE.

My son in the throngs of the valiant was valiant where
cowered the brave,
He grew like the shaft of the pine-tree that towers by
Beraran's dark wave ;

On the ridge of the fore-front of battle, like the moon
 through the dust shone his targe,
And the prince of the land was his comrade, as his
 long spear came up to the charge !
No more will he follow his lord to the conquest of isles
 and of coasts,
No more where the firm earth is shaken by the shout and
 the charging of hosts
'Gainst his shield will the javelins clatter, or the light
 arrows whirr through his plume,
For his bones strew the black ford of Bierna, and his
 flesh feeds the fierce Thing of doom !

FIRST MOTHER.

As a bud in a land of roses
 My little one grew,
As the violet Morn uncloses,
 His eyes of blue ;
As the harps 'neath the golden rafter
 Of the King with the flutes combine,
Was the voice of his silvery laughter
 To this desolate heart of mine !

Alas for the tender blossom
Of bloom and light !
Alas for the mother's bosom
That once was bright !
The brook in the woodland dances,
The sunbeams shimmer and burn,
But the rapture of my love's glances
Will ne'er to my heart return !

SECOND MOTHER.

As a twig of the catkined willow
My loved one bloomed at my side,
She was pure as the moon's white pillow
Of cloud o'er the ocean tide ;
She was winsome and bright and bonny
As the lily by Bana's lake,
She was sweet as the sweet wild honey
The bees in the gold moss make ;
Her mouth was a rose unfolden
With the glory of morning smit,

Her hair as the corn was golden
By the tawn of the Autumn lit :
Her voice was the throstle's singing
At even from Lora's bowers,
Her breath was the wood-breeze bringing
The joy of unnumbered flowers ;
But alas ! and alas ! that never
Again will her hand clasp mine !
Alas for the fateful Riever !
And woe for the Wrath divine !

Then thronged they round the hero and they
cried,

“ Deliverer, by the good Gods sent ! O thou
That comest in the glory and the pride
Of thy young manhood, with thy sunlike brow
Beaming on us the look that never lied
Of hope and comfort, in thy valiance now
Strike for us ! Strike ! and rid us of the Pest
Hurled on us by the nether Gods unblest ! ”

Then called the hero to him a young man

Who sat a strong gray horse and held a spear
In his firm grasp. "The winds this morn that ran
Over the fen where dwells this thing of fear
Not swifter sped than thou must scour the span
'Tween this and high Dun Dalgan, and bring
here

Lia Macha from her brazen stall, and him,
Barana of the light and powerful limb!

"Bring hither the three giants ta'en by me
The day we plundered Mana for my spoil,
With their three brazen flails, and Aranie,
My Poet, and the three hounds, Dil and
Goil

And Brena, and the Skimmer of the meads,
Loy the strong charioteer, and in the toil
Of the loud roaring chase, or in his den,
We'll meet and slay this monster of the fen!"

Away the young man sped, and loud again

Cuhullin cried, "Go to your homes and sleep

The sleep of safety ; and I too am fain

To slumber ! Let this old man watch, and weep

Beside me for his son till on the plain

Eve's shadows fall ; then I will rise and keep

Watch for you through the night with spear and
sword

'Gainst the dread Fiend by Bierna's gloomy ford !"

With that he sprang from off his horse, and lay

Under the riven tree, and closed his eyes

In slumber, while the old man sat all day

Wringing his hands and moaning with low cries

For his dead son, till when the twilight gray

Crept round the hills and from the golden
skies

The sun went down, he cried, "O hero, wake !

And watch by blood-stained Bierna for our sake !"

And all that night he watched before the cave
Of Bierna, by the black ford, and anon
Taunted the Fiend within, and three times drave
His horse half 'cross the ford, and three times
spun

His spear into the air and caught its stave
Shouting as it came down, and when the sun
In pink and saffron robed the rising morn
He heard from th' eastern hill-gap Loy's blithe horn.

Then back unto the village green he sped
And waited, but not long, till from the wood
Came Loy and Aranie, and with them led
Lia Macha and Barana, and the brood
Of Shrang, the three great hounds, black, tawn, and
red,

Brena and Dil and Goil, and those that stood
Like three strong towers, the giants that he won
In Mana when the gory sack was done.

There stood they with their brazen flails and smiled
 With joy to meet their master, while around
The three great dogs of chase in circles wild
 Scampered with gladness o'er the smooth green
 ground,
And loud Barana whinnied when the mild
 Kind accents of his master with sweet sound
Fell on his ears, and eager for the fight
Lia Macha neighed and shook her trappings bright.

Then cried he to the villagers once more,
 “Go to your homes, and, shut therein, abide
Praying unto the Gods, while to the shore
 Of the black fen I and my people ride
To rid you of the Pest; and where before
 You groaned in dull despair, the welcome tide
Of joy may flood your hearts!”—and off he
 rode
With his stout following for the Fiend's abode.

There leapt he from Lia Macha where the fen
Spewed out its sullen flood, and with a look
Of import dread he eyed the monster's den,
And, raising high his spear, its shaft he shook
Defiant ; then advanced the giant men
With their bright brazen flails across the
brook,
Shouting in tones whereat the rugged hills
Trembled with all their forests, lakes, and rills !

Before the den there rose a savage brake
Of copse and woven wood of thorn, wherethrough
No man could rush, and there, a path to make,
Around the giants' heads the bright flails
flew ;
And as strong husbandmen with scythes that take
The meadow grass and all its glories strew
Around them, with their flashing flails of wrath
Up to the den they mowed their master's path.

Then laughing they returned across the stream,
And pointed to the cave, wherefrom the eyes
Of the dread Monster blazed, as like a dream
Of terror he lay crouched, his demon size
Half filling the dark cavern. As a beam
Of sunlight darting or the bolt that flies
O'er the flat meadow from the storm-cloud
sent

Cuhullin 'cross the ford now rushing went,

And leapt upon the bank with armed feet,
Nimble, and up the path of beaten sedge
Left by the giants' flails, strong, fierce, and fleet
He rushed, keen looking o'er his targe's edge
On the huge wolf that now sprang forth to
meet

His coming like the falling of a ledge
In Barna, mixing as he thundered out
His howling with the hero's mighty shout.

'Gainst the great shield he struck, and, as a wave
That plunges from the firm sea-rock, aside
Glanced from the graven disk, and, bounding, clave
With his strong breast the black ford's muddy
tide ;

Then up the other bank through blow of glaive
And lash of flail and dart of javelin tried
In many a fray, he rushed, and headlong sped
Down the broad track that to the village led.

And after him with dreadful clash and clang
Cuhullin rode, swift Loy and Aranie
At his left arm, and loud their harness rang
As their fleet-footed steeds swept down the lea
On the wolf's furious track, that growled and
sprang

Before them, past the lightning-riven tree,
Under thick dust-clouds through the village street,
And outward o'er the meadows cool and sweet !

The peasant cowered behind his garden wall

As they went by ; the children from their play

Fled in blind terror, screaming one and all

As the wild hurricane of chase passed on by
spray

Of falling brook, by mead, by cot and hall,

By rock and hill, by wood and shore, till Day

His golden hand with Night's black palm did join

On level meads beside the fishful Boyne !

There in the midmost of a meadow rose

A sacred fane to Gods whom no one knew

So old it was, and there like virgin snows

A flock of sheep lay nigh it with the dew

Falling on their white fleeces, while with
nose

Half buried in the grass and violets blue,

And twisted horns and ears of silver gray,

The Patriarch of the flock outside them lay.

On him the wolf sprang swift and by the flank

Caught him in his fell jaws, and with a bound
Carried him o'er the encircling wall, and drank

His blood within the fane, where man nor
hound

Would follow him, while over brake and bank

Scattered the panting flock with fear astound ;
And there the hunters slept or watched all night,
Till the fresh morn made earth and ocean bright.

Then with a howl the wolf sprang from the fane

And swept the flat lands with immortal speed,
While, close behind, the hunt rushed on again

Like the fierce whirlwind that mows the mead
And cornfield with its wings of wrath and bane, —

Away, away, hound, man, and foaming steed,
Through Boyne, by Tara's height, by grove and
dell,

Till the hot noon passed by and evening fell !

On the far border of the Bregian plain

A gorge there was by ancient earthquakes split
Through a hill's heart, and now with crimson stain
Its rocks and savage trees were all alit

By the descending sun, as the wild train
Rushed through its darkening mouth, while,
terror-smit,

Before them rushed twelve kine with thundering din
Up to the cliffs that shut the steep gorge in.

There, as Cuhullin neared the dizzy height,

And the fierce herd of kine turned round, his
prey

Sprang on a brindled bull, and, where no light

Gleamed thro' a cave anigh that open lay,
Ramped in his victim's blood, and, as the bright

Sweet dawn awoke, rushed out and made his way
'Neath javelin cast and stroke of sword and flail
From the deep gorge and o'er the open dale.

Away, away through ford and rocky pass

Two long days more they sped, till as the
noon

Of the fourth day died, through a fragrant mass

Of foliage green they burst ; and there the boon
Of Ainè lay before them, — flowers and grass

That drank from light of sun and star and
moon

Their ever-during loveliness, for there

Beside a lake outspread a garden fair.

And by the lake upon a knoll there stood

A lovely house, whose front with traceries
Was beautified, of many-tinted wood,

Carven in rose, and the white flower that sees
The stars from out the pond, with brilliant-hued

Fresh blossoms of the moorlands and the leas
And gardens, and the meadow's grassy floors,
All intertwined round windows, walls, and doors.

And all the knoll was bloom, the garden sweet
All bloom and light, as if no Winter there
Had ever shown with deadly frowns unmeet
His frosty beard, and soft the perfumed air
Blew from the lake, as with destructive feet
The wolf now rushed o'er lawn and flower-bed
fair
On to the house, 'neath shaft and javelin whirr,—
The house and peaceful home of Bras Mac
Lir !

Now Bras Mac Lir a priest of Ainè was,
Well versed in every rite and mystery
Of the bright Goddess, and the gentle laws
That govern love and the flower progeny
Of earth and sun, and how kind Nature draws
Her sustenance from both, and blithe was he,
With his fair sons and daughters and his spouse,
Within that happy, smiling, sunlit house.

In the bright sunny chamber sat they now,
Sire, wife, and children, while through bank and
bed

Of flowers the wolf drave as the sharpened plough
Through the soft sward, till, his eyes flaming red,
He burst into the chamber, every brow
Paling at his fell aspect, as with head
Savage and huge and grim he crouching lay
Glaring on them, ready to spring and slay.

Then came the tread of armèd feet, and fast
Through the door strode Cuhullin, and plunged deep
Into the wolf's broad breast his sword, that passed
Through heart and lung, ere the fell beast could
leap
With his sharp fangs upon him ; — grim and vast
Against the wall he lay, a gory heap,
No more to ramp and raven in the blood
Of the sad folk by Bierna's gloomy flood !

Now Bras Mac Lir before his household cried:

“O bright-clad hero, God-sent here to save
My dear ones! ’mid thy targe’s circle wide

I see the eagle soaring o’er his wave,
I see the Red Branch, royal Eman’s pride!

Then thou art he who took the option brave
Of the short life and glorious, — thou art he,
Famed through the islands and o’er many a
sea!”

Then strode the giants through the hall, and bore
The dread Thing from the chamber, and afar
Amid the woods buried him in his gore

In a dark spot where neither light of star
Nor moon could reach him, nor the sunbeams
pour

Their gold upon his grave, — an oaken spar
Driven through his heart into the bloody clay,
To bind him in his darksome home away.

Meanwhile the priest cried, "Why thou cam'st I
know

Chasing this demon Pest: for one bright morn
Beside our crystal lake five days ago

I saw a train bright as if they were born
In fairy-land, where sweetest blossoms blow

Upon the mead, to sound of flute and horn,
And harp and pipe and tympan, resting there
Around a silk pavilion smooth and fair.

"And at its door upon a brazen seat

A lady sat, fair as the flower that blows
In summer when the garden is complete

Of blossoms, and the beautiful white rose
Laughs in their midst, her ladies at her feet

On the cool grass, and like the pine that
grows

Tallest in Tunnamara's mountain wood
A kingly man of battle by them stood.

“ And Fame had come before, and well I knew
Great Curoi, and fair Blanid, and their train,
And the fond promises 'tween her and you,
And thy misfortunes, and her bosom's pain,
And I am Ainè's priest, and through the blue
Of heaven I'll send my prayers that not in
vain
Thou comest on the eve of her bright feast
To save my house and slay this monstrous beast.”

Now when the house with perfume and with prayer
Was purified, and when the Night divine
With all her diamond lamps through th' eastern
air

Upclomb, and bathèd earth in the sacred wine
Of slumber and forgetfulness of care,
Cuhullin slept, and through the fairy mine
Of dream he wandered and in glimpses dim
He saw his loved one ever weep for him !

At morn he woke and called to Aranie :

“ Poet and friend through fair or adverse tide,
Arise and take my following home with thee,
Giants and hounds and all, and there abide
Till my return, for only Loy shall be
My comrade searching for my promised bride ;
For I have dreamt and seen her lovely eyes
All drowned in tears for me, and heard her sighs ! ”

Then Loy and strong Cuhullin sought their steeds,
And left the priest 'mid his green leaves em-
bowered,

And to the south all day o'er streams and meads
And dales and mosses and great moors they
scoured,

And at the silent hour when the sun leads
His glorious cohorts 'neath the waves, devoured
With love and grief, by Loy he laid him down
And slept till Morning donned her yellow crown.

And all that day beneath the burning sky
Still south they rode swift as the eagle's wings,
Till at the eve where rose the mountains high
Like a tall circle of old Druid kings
Watching the closing of their fire God's eye
Over the crimson waves, by Blama's springs
Cuhullin and swift Loy in mournful mood
Lay down to sleep within a windless wood.

There dreamt he a strange dream, that made him
see

A sight whereat his heart did throbbing run, —
A lovely stream that sang melodiously,
A meadow o'er which Ainè bright had spun
Her many-tinted robe of brilliancy,
And on its verge a gay pavilion
Whose lofty poles and roof 'neath sunset's
gold
Shone with rare glory over mead and wold !

And by its door he saw his loved one sit
 With her bower-maids, the squires, and foster-
 dame,
And the great Knight, while in a rapturous fit
 The minstrel took his harp and named her name
In a blithe song that caused the wood-birds flit
 Out from their homes, and for a space made tame
The shy brown rabbit with his ears in air,
And the red fox that watched him from his lair !

But nathless all the sweetness of the lay,
 He saw in her blue eyes but thoughts of him,
He saw her memories were far away
 In Mana, by the blue lake's bosky rim,
And thought he heard her sigh, — low murmuring
 say,
“ Ah me ! ah me ! ah me ! mine eyes are dim
With weeping, O beloved ! why com'st thou not ?
Am I, thine own, so very soon forgot ?

“ Alas ! alas ! In joy the sun may rise,
Beyond the mountain’s ridge in glory set ;
But naught of day or night can glad mine eyes,
Can charm my soul or cure my heart’s regret.
Ah me ! ah me ! why are Love’s golden ties
Made to be broken ? why, when once we
met,
Are we two chosen, O beloved, to be
Parted forever, plunged in misery ? ”

Then daylight died, dark shadows gathered down,
And slowly faded all the vision bright,
And he awoke. Naught saw he save the brown
High hill-tops towering through the ghostly
night.

Then loud he called on Loy. “ By my renown,
O valiant friend,” he said, “ I’ve seen a sight
In dream that soon may bring a fateful hour
To me and yonder Knight of Caher’s tower !

“But rest we while we may : the night is still,
And I will think of her I love the best.”

“May no dark dreams of blighting grief and ill,
O master mine,” said Loy, “disturb thy rest ! ”

So slept they side by side, till th’ eastern hill
Waxed red with morn, and then through his
high crest

The fresh wind played as swiftly on they sped
Down the lone pathway that still southward led.

Fair smiled the morning upon Blama’s hills,
The silver mists curled up from moor and plain,
Blithe poured from myriads of joyous bills
The wild-birds’ songs and mingled with the
strain

Of murmuring winds and woods and falling rills,
As with light heart the lord of Beramain
On his fresh couch of fern-leaves oped his eyes,
Leapt on his steed and looked upon his prize.

And as he looked he heard a trumpet clear
Sound from the northern wood, and then there rode
Into the glade a Knight. As he drew near
Gay in the sun his gilded armor glowed ;
Lordly his mien, high raised his glittering spear,
Caparisoned in blue his charger strode
O'er the green grass, and arched his neck and
neighed,
And with his jangling bridle champet and played !

“Dost know this shield's Red Branch and Soaring
Bird,

High prince of Beramain ?” the stranger said ;
And at the voice with flush of anger stirred
Stern Curoi his bold question answerèd,
“Where'er Fame's trumpet sounds, or Rumor's heard,
That shield is known ! But by what black weird led
Comes strong Dun Dalgan's prince across my path ?”
“I come,” Cuhullin cried in rising wrath, —

“I come to win back thy misgotten prize,
Mine own beloved, the bloom-bright Maid of
Man!”

“Thou com’st to dye this grass with ruddy dyes
Of thy best blood,” cried Curoi, “and to ban
All knighthood with thy word forsworn! Her eyes
Shall see the fight, so let him take who can!
Lo! there she stands with her fear-whitened face;
Look thy last on her now, and take thy place!”

Then rose the rivalry and hate of years
Hot raging in their hearts, as round they went
To sunder for the red race of the spears,
And as the wind-blown flame burns up the
bent
On a brown mountain’s back that autumn sears,
So all kind thoughts of good got banishment
From their hard hearts of pride where revelled free
Infuriate wrath and burning jealousy.

Meanwhile, as one who on a wreck doth stand
That the wide wallowing waves toss to and
fro,

And sees the saving boat put from the land,
Now high, now in the sea-trough sunken low,
Trembling 'tween fear and hope, each lily hand
Pressed o'er her heart as if to hide her woe,
And pale as one who had forsaken life,
Young Blanid stood to watch the coming strife!

Short time she stood and looked with fear-dazed eye,
Till each strong knight his lance the level gave,
And like the thunder cried his battle cry,
And spurred his steed, and 'cross the greensward
drave,

And as two rounded rocks that standing high
Each side a deep sheer dell, when rain-storms lave
The soft sands from beneath them, downward break
And meet, and with loud shock the firm earth shake,

So on the trembling sward in mid career

The heroes met, so each went thundering down,
Fierce horse and man ; but yet each valiant spear

Had done its work ; stern Curoi's helmet crown,
Torn off, upon the grass lay glittering near,

And through Cuhullin's shield with mighty
stowne

Curoi's sharp point to the white shoulder went
And all his glittering mail with blood besprent.

Then sprang they to their feet and warily

Looked in each other's eyes with look of hate,
And crossed their jarring swords, and with bent
knee

Fought a long time their burning ire to sate,
Till like a storm-uprooted stately tree

Cuhullin fell, and Curoi stood elate,
Eying him as the hunter eyes the boar
That fighting falls but yet may rise once more.

“I ’ll slay thee not!” he said, “but this strong man
Must free thee from the Gods!” — then caught
and raised

His mighty spear, and then a two-foot span
Of the bright brazen blood-red point outblazed
Beyond a follower’s back, that shivering, wan,
With fear looked at the fight, — whose eyes death
glazed

Even as he fell; — the varlet stout was he
Who in fair Blamid’s train came o’er the sea.

“I ’ll slay thee not, but I will bind thee sore,
And rive thee of thy yellow flowing hair,
That in the press of knights thou ’lt ride no more
For many a weary moon of grief and care!”
Then loud he called a squire, who with a store
Of hempen coils came from the tent, and there
With many a knot they bound the luckless knight,
And reft him of his yellow locks of light.

Trembling against the strong pavilion pole

The Bright One leant and watched the bitter fray,
Strong hope and terror struggling in her soul

As the quick swords clashed in their murderous
play ;

And when she saw her loved one, falling, roll

On the red grass, a cry of wild dismay
Burst from her, like the last despairing scream
Of one who sinks amid the ocean stream.

Then o'er the hoof-torn sward she tottering stept,

And by his side fell down with dreary moan,
And pressed her face to his, and sobbed and wept

In a low, wailing voice,—“Mine own ! mine own !
O love ! O love !” she cried, “why hast thou kept

This bloody tryst ? Why cam'st thou here
alone ?

Alas ! the answer in thine eyes I see ;

Love brought thee hither, — love ! for me, for me !

“Why have we loved? Why was thy true heart fed
With hopes of bliss? O dear one! but for me
'Mid green Ulidian hills thou now wouldst tread,
Chasing the dun deer through the wild-woods
free!

Now a poor captive liest thou here instead,
Bound helpless in these bonds of shame, and he,
Thy victor in the contest, mocks thee sore,
But in thy shame I love thee more and more!

“Farewell! farewell! He strikes his sounding shield,
But Love is cunning, and Revenge is strong;
Though my weak hand no gleaming sword can
wield,

Red blood shall flow for this thy shame ere long:—
Farewell! farewell! The frosts in glade and field
Will nip the flowers, ere thou thy peers among
Shalt ride as fits a knight by hill or shore,
But in thy shame I love thee more and more!”

“O loved one,” low he said, “what tongue can
tell

My heart’s despair, mine anguish, and my pain
To meet thee thus? Alas! farewell, farewell!

Fate smites us hard, yet we may meet again!”
One moment more, and in her jewelled selle

She sat perforce, and ’mid the guardian train
Of glimmering spears, oft gazing sadly back,
She vanished down the forest’s southern track.

Then Loy stepped out from the wild tangled wood,

And with his dagger reft the bonds away,
And deftly from the shoulder wiped the blood,

With healing herbs the long torn wound to stay;
And free once more Dun Dalgan’s hero stood

Shamefaced, and like two ghosts that shun the
day,

Skulking through woods and paths untrod of men,
They sought Ben Borka’s friendly peaks again.

THE MEETING OF THE LOVERS.

NIGH the great, craggy mountains that each eve,
High towering through the calm Momonian
sky,

In golden cones and pinnacles receive
The last red glories from Day's closing eye,
From where the silver streams blithe singing leave
Their birthplaces amid the summits high,
A wilderness slopes downward to the sea
That murmurs on its gray beach joyously.

High towering o'er the tallest pines that wave
 Their green heads in that blooming summer wold,
With towers and battlements and fosses brave,
 In gray, grim state stands Curoi's castle old,
Upon whose front did hoary Time engrave,
 Through many a summer's heat and winter's
 cold,
His battle marks, his scars of wasting frost,
And rainy storms from the wild sea waves tost.

There is a high and lordly chamber there,
 A broad brown hall hung with quaint draperies
That picture ancient Gods of sea and air,
 Heroes of might, and ships before the breeze,
And sylvan feasts, and merry greenwoods fair
 Where wild things gambol 'neath the rustling
 trees
And hunters range, and o'er its massive doors
Hang wolf-brows and the curvèd teeth of boars.

And round about its great cyclopean walls
Are ranged in dusty state with antlers spread
Skulls of the primal elk, and brazen mauls
And shields for centuries unburnishèd,
Jackets of mail, and banners black as palls
That bright in ages gone to victory led,
And glaives and spears rusted with ancient
gore,
Crossed now, but not in conflict as of yore.

•

Now on them steals the yellow morning light,
These trophies of great heroes dead and gone,
And the huge chamber gradually grows bright
And a grim swarthy smile of joy puts on ;
As some old forest nook with moss bedight
Seems all ablaze with splendor when the sun
Looks through its guardian tree-boles, blithe, and
fills
Its depths with ruddy light from orient hills.

A window openeth to the sunny bay
And the faint breezes of the day new born
Lightly with its barbaric draperies play,
And from their sleep the twittering eve-birds
warn ;
And there, like two sweet bunches of the May
That bloom in light on Doona's fairy thorn,
Stand Blanid and young Mora motionless
Gazing o'er bay and beach and wilderness.

No living thing she sees where'er she looks,
Save the white gull its wheeling course that steers,
Or o'er the wood the morn-awakened rooks,
Or sea-hawk's wing that through the haze
appears,
Or hermit heron from far inland brooks
On one long leg amid the shallow meres
Watching the scaly sea tribes, as he stands
Like a lone spirit of the silent sands.

Then wept she to herself awhile, and said
Verses from love-lorn poets to relieve
Her burning, doubting heart with hope unfed, —
The more she said, the more to sigh and
grieve, —
And took her lute, with music sad to wed
The verses that some ancient bard did weave
To soothe his own heart, or some lover's pain,
And thus with dove-like voice she sang her strain :—

SONG.

“ Deep in the dell where ferns are growing
A fountain springs,
And o'er its gentle wavelets flowing
And blossoms in the sunshine blowing
The sky-lark sings : —
Oh ! how he sings unto his mate
Down from the ether blue,
While I sit here all desolate
And think, beloved, of you !

“ O happy bird, each hour returning
Unto its nest
Love’s rapture in its bosom burning !
O heart of mine, forever mourning
In sore unrest !
How dear the sky-lark’s happy state
Beside its lover true,
While I, alone, all desolate,
Sit here and weep for you ! ”

Now looked she on the ancient tapestry
Whereon the wood was pictured, and therein
She saw a little bright-winged bird in glee
Singing its voiceless carol sweet and thin
On Monad’s Mount, upon the sacred Tree
Of Life, and then she thought how near
akin
Her life was to that happy bird’s one time,
And sang, grief-filled again, the poet’s rhyme : —

SONG.

“The linnet on his leafy bough
Sang O so clear and sweet !
When Love my comrade was, but now
That Love is gone on wingèd feet,
No more to give my heart good-morrow,
What can I with the linnet’s song
But sadly sit and listen long,
And think it full of sorrow?

“The throstle at the opening day
Sang O so sweet and clear !
In Love’s delightful month of May ;
But now that Love lies cold and drear,
What can my heart but sadness borrow?
What can I with the warbling note
The throstle pipes from his sweet throat
But think it full of sorrow?

“For Love in life was all I had,
Love O so fresh and sweet !
To make my lonely bosom glad,
But now, ah ! never more to meet
His sunny smile and dear good-morrow,
What can I with this life of mine
But muse upon its woes and pine,
And think it naught but sorrow?”

And still she weeps and still cries mournfully, —

“He comes not to console my wasting pain!

Alas that I have loved! Ah, woe is me

For the heart's loneliness and longings vain,

And promised bliss and wordless misery!

I've seen brown Autumn end his lingering
reign,

And hoary Winter his white mantle spread

O'er the sad earth, with yearning still unfed.

“I've seen blithe Springtide change with genial
ray

The hills' frore pyramids to golden green,

But watching in my misery day by day,

No sight of my beloved one have I seen;

I've ta'en my silken broidery to allay,

Weaving its shining threads, my sorrows keen,

My unavailing hopes and bitter fears,

But only wet its woof with ceaseless tears!

“And now gay Summer with her sunny gleams
In royal robes moves through her perfumed
bowers,

Her heralds wild-birds’ music, songs of streams,

And the bees’ tiny trumpets ’mid the flowers :

Alas, alas, that I have dreamed these dreams !

And woe is me for love’s lost honeyed hours !

For while joy reigns around and all is glad

In earth and heaven, I — I alone am sad ! ”

Then Mora said, “ The hour is drawing nigh,

O mistress, for the ending of our gloom,

The blissful, happy hour when you and I

Shall walk through fair Dun Dalgan’s groves of
bloom

As once we walked in Mana, where our sky

Was bright with joys that never now illumine

Our lives, or fill with gladness and delight

Our morning and our noontide and our night !

“There never was a princess yet in story,
Captive to some sea rover or some king,
Some giant or some miser old and hoary,
That did not win at last, when, sweetening
Her life with hope of love and all the glory
And gladness that her hero's deeds would
bring,
She saw her star rise from the clouds malign
Of black despair, as thou wilt now see thine !

“For, as I walked beside the stream that sees
At the hill's foot the wild things at their
play
Round its green banks, and all the mysteries
Of the blue heavens, the eve of yesterday,
I saw an old man sitting where the trees
Bend o'er the tumbling water's diamond spray,
With a small harp, a long begrizzled beard,
And a great sword that made me half afeard !

“ And as I stood irresolute, he cast
A kindly look on me and said, ‘ Sit here,
O brown-eyed little beauty, for thou hast
No cause to shun me and no cause to
fear !

Sit by this tree that yet will be the mast
Of some great ship ! I am the poet-seer
Of him thy mistress loveth, — Aranie
Of strong Dun Dalgan by the eastern sea !

“ ‘ Sit by me here and learn this song I sing,
And sing it to thy mistress ! ’ — and he took
His harp and with deft fingers touched its string,
And in strange accents like the voiceful brook
Three times he sang this song, and made me
bring

My voice in tune with his, till every nook
Of rock and wild-wood with the echoes rang ! ”
And then she took the golden lute and sang : —

THE MESSAGE.

“Is the spirit of gladness dead?

Are there naught but regrets and fears?

Hath hope from thy bosom fled

That thou drownest thine eyes with tears?

Wilt thou never, O loved one ! never

Grief and thy heart dissever,

And gather the roses red

Of joy for the after years?

“From the troubles that waste and mar

Joy and delight are born,

Reward stands oft afar,

Near are defeat and scorn ;

But the steadfast soul hath in it

Power that can work and win it,

The comfort of hope's bright star

In the glow between mirk and morn !

“True love hath a charmed life,

It wakes in the morning air,

It walks in the noonday strife,

It lives through the midnight's care ;

And better in hope receive it,

In trusting faith believe it,

Than die by Grief's dread knife

Or the arrow of black Despair !

“ Then up he stood, and went, and like a dream
The whole thing was to me ; but now I'll seek
The King's bright garden where the fiery beam
Of morn doth kiss the rose-bud's ruddy
cheek ; —

Watch from the window, downward by the stream,
O'er the blithe forest and the hillside bleak,
The strand, the moorland and the glittering mere,
For in my heart I know thy love is near ! ”

And Blamid looks. From round a looming cape
On whose high-towering front the sea-birds sit
Guarding their windy homes, a boat doth shape
Its course and cross the sunny harbor flit
And round a point with sea-caves all agape,
Till from its prow, his burnished harness lit
By the glad morning sun, with spear in hand
And waving plume, a knight springs to the
strand.

Where'er Love's flame with light immortal burns

What wondrous instinct in the bosom lies !

Ah ! thus with her, the Bloom-bright One, — by
turns

Her cheeks grow pale, then red as morning skies,
For well her heart foreknows whose footstep spurns

The white sands far beneath her, and her eyes
Shine with unwonted brightness as she sees
Cuhullin's long plume waving in the breeze !

With red lips parted in a smile more sweet

Than roses smile in their first virgin bloom,
She turns, her golden-sandalled winsome feet

Tread with light step across the lordly room
As though they trod on air, her pulses beat

With a strange rapture, and her year of
gloom,

Like a black vision nigh the morning seen,
Seems all forgot, as though it ne'er had been !

Fast through a secret postern to the wood
Out glided she, and down a pathway sped
That wound by knolls of heather red as blood,
And decked with fresh flowers, to the harbor
led,

Till by a spreading oak she sudden stood
Irresolute, with a strange fear adread,
And sat her down in a faint musing fit,
And plucked a little flower and gazed on it.

And as she looked upon its petals bright
She thought of her lost home, her golden bower
In Mana, and her days of young delight
When she was fresh and pure as that sweet
flower ;

Then sprang she up, and like a dove aflight
From the quick forester's keen shaft of power,
Adown the path half blind with tears she ran,
Till where it reached the beach's sunny span,

Beyond the wood shade, in the open ray

She saw a godlike form all glittering

With loving arms outstretched athwart her way ;

Then felt them closely round her press and
cling

In fond embrace, and heard a kind voice say,

“O love! O love! be this thy welcoming

To my true heart!” then faded wood and shore

And for a space she saw and heard no more !

She woke ; 't was on a bank where o'er them
spread

A young tree 'tween them and the joyous skies,
Upon his mail-clad arm her shining head

Was pillowed, and his large gray kingly eyes
Looked into hers with love unshadowèd

By absence or the burning doubt that tries
The lover's heart with sevenfold fire : then she,
Forgetting for a time her misery,

Slowly uprising, round his strong neck flung

Her arms, and hid 'gainst his her burning
face,

And as a wild vine the green woods among

Shivers wind-blown against its tree, a space
Around him, her strong refuge now, she clung

Trembling, then sudden sprang from his embrace
And stood before him half afeard, half shy,
With drooping form and sad deploring eye.

And "O beloved!" she cried, "think not of me

As once, when in the heyday of my fame
I won thy heart in virgin purity, —

When princes from earth's farthest confines came
To court my smiles!—now, now what dost thou
see

Before thee? A poor wretch of blight and shame,
For whom the Fates a dismal doom have wove,
His blood-won slave despised, his thrall of love!

“ Ah ! would this heart were dead, these eyes were
blind,

At rest from ceaseless torture day by day ! —
Torture by his fell presence thrice refined ;

For though he loves in his rough soldier way,
I hate him tenfold among all mankind,

And, hating, must dissemble as I may,
Must cringe and lie, for I am brought so low
That pride and truth are conquered by my woe !

“ Arise then, O beloved one ! and depart,
And leave me to the woes I must endure ;
I am not worth thy faith : life hath its smart,
But death ere long will come and bring the cure ! ”
He rose, he clasped her to his faithful heart,
And fondly cried, “ To me thou’rt bright and
pure,
O love ! and I will bear thee back with me,
And my young bride high honored shalt thou be ! ”

Ah ! well for them that Curoi with his knights
Is on the southern borders of his land,
Encamped amid the lovely pine-clad heights
That rise o'er spreading Carra's silver strand !
There roams he, tasting all the fresh delights
That woodcraft brings when summer winds are
bland,
Forgetting his fair prize and her sad lot,
And that wronged love revengeful sleepeth not.

Again they sat beneath the leafy tree,
On the green flowery bank, gaze answering
gaze,
And word fond word, in love's fresh ecstasy,
As once before in those lost happy days
Far, far away in Mana of the Sea.
Thus sat they till the hot noon's torrid rays
Smote sea and wood, then down the pathway came
Unto their trysting-place the foster-dame.

“And art thou come?” she cried, “O valiant one!

Hath love o’er thy true heart such wondrous
power,

That thou in blind desire must heedless run

Into the lion’s jaws for this poor flower?

Alas that ever shone the mocking sun

Upon our bootless rage! This very hour
A courier crossed the bridge on courser light
To tell of his great lord’s return to-night.

“Arise then and depart! His purpose dread

I know not, yet I know that naught remains
For thee but instant flight, else on her head

Will fall his anger, and renewèd pains
Will rive our hearts, and thou on dungeon
bed

Shalt lie beneath the moat in captive chains
Till into black despair thy warm heart sink,
Or the red block thy youthful blood shall drink.

“Depart ! depart ! The hour will yet draw near
For love and for thy vengeance long delayed :
The Summer flowers bloom bright by stream and
mere

And wood and crag, but thou must let them
fade

Thy vengeance still unwon ; then Autumn sere
Shall come, but when upon the moaning glade
Slain by the winds of Winter he expires
'Mid Samhain's feast and sacrificial fires,

“Then do thou come, and with thy bravest band
Valiant and swift and sure, and here abide
Within this secret wood. Then Curoi's sand
Of life shall run its last, for I will guide
To vengeance sure and stern thine armed hand !

Then in his hour of triumph and of pride
We'll slay him as the forest dwellers slay
The wolf that bears their best-loved child away !

“And thou, poor child of many sorrows, lay
Thy face against this withered breast of mine
To shut from thy sad eyes the woful ray
That lights his parting footsteps! Gaily shine
O'er sea and hill the beams of middle day,
And ye must part, and thou must now un-
twine
Thine arms from him, O maid!” — and shudder-
ingly,
Moaning the while in her great agony,

Fair Blanid saw him go. Then as a wreath
Of snow at Springtide in the mountain pass
Slides from its cleft to the flat sward beneath,
So dropt she down upon the woodland grass
All motionless, as though she ne'er would breathe
Earth's air again. Too soon, too soon, alas!
She woke to weep, then rose and weeping still
With the old foster-dame went up the hill!

Meanwhile Cuhullin plied the rapid oar .

Of the light boat with gladsome heart and fond
Across the harbor, round the sea-cape hoar,
And into a lone wood-locked cove beyond,
Where sprang he lightly to the wave-ribbed shore
And up the wild-wood went, Love's golden
wand

Touching his heart with its sweet sorcery,
Till won he where a stream danced fresh and free

From ledge to ledge into a glade of green :

And there Loy waited, there the twain bestrode
Their steeds, and like a dream each changing
scene

Seemed hurrying by as in hot haste they rode
Unto the North, till, as with ray serene

Upon the mountain-tops the sunset glowed,
They laid them down and slept, and morn again
Found them fast speeding o'er the perilous plain.

THE SLAYING OF CUROI AND THE
REVENGE OF HIS MINSTREL.

GREEN are the hills of early summer-time,
And lingering long their emerald glories fade,
When Autumn with slow steps begins to climb
Their breezy fronts from the brown forest
shade,
Nipping the grass and flowers with frosty rime,
Till long-drawn glen and bosky upland glade,
Broad shadowy moor and skyey mountain spire,
Put on their heathery robes of purple fire.

And slowly as it comes, it fades away,

The glory of the heather's purple glow,

Like human grandeur born but to decay

As the long years glide on with footsteps
slow ; —

The woods are bare, the hills are cold and gray,

The cheerless morns no genial heat bestow ;

And thus the earth changed with the changing sun

Till Winter and the Samhain feast came on.

One day, before the feast, the old dame sat

By the bower window of her foster child,

And looked upon the northern moorland flat,

And saw a horseman spurring from the wild,

And laughed, and rubbed her withered hands
thereat,

And on her foster daughter looked and smiled

A crafty smile, exulting as she said,

“ Behold the first crumb of his bitter bread !

“I was not born yesterday. I know

The wiles of courts, the unstable hearts of men,
And this sweet tongue some little seed did sow

Within these walls, that have sprung up again
In fruit whose baleful taste is war and woe.

See the good horseman how he scours the
glen!

How up the stony path his harness rings !

Black with fell wrath be all the news he brings !”

With clash and clang the horseman passed the
gate,

With tottering steps he gained the lofty hall,
And to the knights assembled 'gan relate

How Roving Angus of the Iron Maul
Fell upon Lora, wreaking his fierce hate

On kith and kin of Ademar the Tall,
The bravest knight that e'er in battle tide
Put lance in rest by noble Curoi's side.

And soon the northern causeway gleamed with steel,
As Ademar went off with all his power,
And as the sun with golden chariot-wheel
Had sought 'neath crimson clouds his western
bower,
With dying steed that scarce the spur could feel,
Another courier came from Barra's tower
To tell unto the knights his tale forlorn
How Talc the Pirate sacked it on that morn.

Next day a messenger from Brann the Red
With gory spur came o'er the eastern moors
To tell them how the Hold of Dunigled
Was fast besieged by rascal slaves and
boors,
How scarce its ancient towers in conflict dread
Their ruffian war another day endures,
And asking for a gallant knightly band
With conquering spears to quell their bloody hand.

And thus the couriers came ; thus forth they went,
The knights and men, to the far border lands,
And as an evil sprite from hell upsent
The old dame glided round and rubbed her
hands,
And smiled and leered in her false merriment,
And brewed her cruel plot, till of his bands
Remained with Curoi only ten good spears
When Samhain's sun rose o'er the eastern meres.

An hour before the fires were all alight
By stead and town, temple, and village green,
In worship of the mild Queen of the night,
The old dame stole adown the forest screen,
Till by a lonely brook that took its flight
Murmuring two tangled banks of wood be-
tween,
She found Dun Dalgan's lord in ambush hid
With many a mail-clad man the copse amid.

“And O thou faithful knight!” she whispered low,
“The hour is nigh thine own beloved to save;
Watch well this sounding stream, and when the glow
Thou mark’st of white swan’s feathers on its
wave

That I as signal for the deed shall throw
Into its bed above, then bare thy glaive
And with thy warriors storm the hold, and slay
And work the bitter vengeance as ye may!”

Meanwhile, as evening o’er the valleys threw
Its mantle gray, within his lordly hall
Sat the great knight amidst a merry crew
Of squires and pages, gladsome one and all;
There some with eyes intent the hazard drew,
Some the white dice upon the board let fall,
Some quaffed the golden mead, some moved the
chess,
Laughing the while in their full happiness.

Stately he sat, a smile on his brown face,
As he looked round upon the revelry,
His scarlet robe thrown back with kingly
grace,
His saffron tunic flowing to his knee,
With golden belt that showed the cunning trace
In gems of monsters of the land and sea,
With gorget glittering, and dark locks bare
Silvered a little by the helmet's wear.

In his right hand he raised a sparkling bowl,
And "Fill," he said, "O merry friends of
mine,
And drink unto the mistress of my soul,
Blanid, the peerless one, the dame divine!
And though she weep betimes, as seasons roll,
May she wax glad again, and may she shine
In her bright beauty fresh as roses red
That deck the garden bowers when Winter's dead!"

And she within her bower lay hid, each sound
From the far banquet-hall that reached her ear
Making her heart with new-fledged terrors
bound ;

While the old foster-dame went far and near
From door to door the joyous castle round,
And oft into the banquet-hall would peer,
Oft to the postern gate would secret go,
Watching her time the signal white to throw.

And still within the darksome forest glen
Cuhullin lay, and watched the darkness come,
And all was silent round, save now and then
From the bright castle doors would float a
hum

Of merriment, or from the moory fen
The curlew's whistle or the bittern's drum
Would sound inconstant, till a breeze blew chill,
And the white moon clomb o'er the eastern hill.

Then all at once the Samhain fires outblazed
 To welcome night's mild Empress, bright and
 high
On the round-shouldered mountains some upraised,
 Some low adown flaring against the sky ;
But noting naught of them, Cuhullin gazed
 Into the darksome waters hurrying by,
Starting at every leaf and moonlight gleam
That whirled and flashed upon the lonely stream.

At length, as higher rose the moon's pale rays
 Over the withered trees, and on the tide
Flickered in flakes of snowy pearl, his gaze
 Caught the first gleaming of the white swan's
 pride
Floating adown ; and as a wolf that stays
 All night within his lair, and long has eyed
Its woodland prey and sees it near, he sprang
Unto his feet, and while with mighty clang

Of mail-jacks and of clattering spears, his kin
Followed him, 'cross the stream he sprang, and
fast

Out from the shadow of the dark ravine
And up the moonlit hill-sides fierce they passed
Unto the castle gate with furious din,
And fell on the scant guard, who all aghast
Stood at the porch and met the bloody shock
Like withered fern before the falling rock.

And then, as ocean's tide, wild wave on wave,
Driven before the storm, with deafening roar,
Hurry, and turmoil fills some yawning cave
Tossing its spray on high, so through the door,
In one bewildering whirl of plume and glaive,
They filled the hall, and with dread shouts down
bore

The revellers' faint resistance, all save him
Who now stood looking on them cold and grim.

Against the wall he stood, his eagle eye
 Glancing around upon the bloody wrack
Seeking his foe, then reached his hand on high
 And seized a brazen maul, and to the attack
Like the red lightning-bolt that cleaves the sky
 He sprang, and, for a moment's space, beat back
The hedge of spears, till, drenched with hostile
 blood,
He gained the spot where fierce Cuhullin stood.

There from a soldier's arm he tore the targe
 And poised it o'er his breast with warm blood
 wet,
And with tall knee advanced looked o'er its marge
 Into his foeman's eyes, and, fearless yet,
With a great bound leapt forward to the charge,
 Shouting his cry of war, but ere they met,
Pierced by a score of spears he fell, the tide
Of life fast welling from his riven side.

Then hard a jackman smote him as he bled,
But as the spear-but whirled on high again,
Cuhullin sheered away the caitiff's head,
And kneeling down in strange remorse and
pain

By the great knight, "O man of men!" he said,
"I'd give my life and all my broad domain
To see thee as thou wert, my brother true
In camp and court ere strife between us grew!"

Once moved his lips with words he could not say,
Once rolled his eyes his ruined hall around,
And he was dead! Upon the hill-side gray,
High o'er the mournful beach, they made his
mound;

And as the mountain tops 'neath morning's ray
Threw off their circling vapors, northward bound,
Cuhullin rode along the woodlands bare
With his stout followers and his lady fair.

Upon the new-raised mound all drearily

Sat Curoi's minstrel brooding in his woe,

One day that upward moaning from the sea

Through the sere wood the wind began to blow :

Naught recked he of the wild wind's wrath or
glee,

For of the mighty man who lay below

Sleeping for aye the thoughts would constant rise

And swell his heart and blind with tears his eyes.

At length he took his harp, and, low at first,

Woke its thin voice in mournful preludings ;

Then high and clear a wailing strain outburst

'Neath his light fingers from the trembling
strings ;

Then frowning with black brows like one athirst

For blood and for the joy that vengeance brings,

He left the mound, strode down the hill-side gray,

And to the northward took his weary way.

And many a sight he saw by dale and down,
Wandering till Winter's snows began to fade
From the rejoicing hills, and his renown
Preceded him, and wheresoe'er he strayed
The people flocked from village, tower, and town
To hear the wondrous music that he made
On his weird harp, — a thing from heaven down-
sent, —

And crowned him first of bards where'er he went !

The village urchin and the maiden shy,
The matron staid, the soldier brave and young,
The aged carle, stood each with tearful eye
And wept betimes at the sad songs he
sung ;

And thus he roamed till day by day the sky
Grew warmer, and the budding blossoms hung
From the laburnum and the lilac pale,
And the young grass in emerald robed the vale.

And day by day, as still he wandered on
From side to side, but always north, the hills
Grew brighter, o'er the breezy moorlands dun
The young lambs gambolled, and the streams
and rills
Sang songs of gladness, for the amorous sun
Kissed them not vainly, till with gentle thrills
The warm winds played amidst the opening bowers,
And all the meads were gay with Springtide flowers.

And Summer came ; the corn-stalks marshalled
stood
O'er the bright fields in all their greenery,
The foxglove's glorious crimson edged the wood,
The wild rose laughed, the gleaming apple-tree
Showered down its blossoms on the linnet's brood
That chirped amid its branches ; glad and free
All things o'er Nature's throbbing bosom glowed,
Save the fierce minstrel on his weary road.

And as he wandered on, one sunny day,
Where four roads crossed within a beechen
screen

He saw through the thin branches far away
The glint of mail-rings and the brassy sheen
Of targets and the glow of helmets gay,
Of scarlet mantles and of tunics green,
And dim beneath the sun-enlivened trees
A country multitude surrounding these.

And as with weary steps he drew anigh,
Four trumpeters on silver trumpets played
A melody with long-drawn notes and high,
Then a great cymbal-clash wild clamor made ;
And then a stately man with haughty eye,
The king's own herald, in bright robes
arrayed,
Upraised his truncheon with red gold aflame,
And to the wondering people 'gan proclaim : —

“ O men ! O men ! O men ! pale Death is strong
And life is weak ; and, like the withered grass,
Before his dreadful scythe the lord of song,
The King's own bard, to Death's dim realm did
pass

Not long ago ; and now all things are wrong
With the great King, for, like false-sounding brass,
Or jarring notes of a cracked virginal,
The next bard's songs upon his sad ears fall !

“ And 't is for this the silver trumpets blow,
For this the brazen cymbals clash and ring,
And 't is for this I wander to and fro, —
To find a bard will please my lord the King ;
And I have journeyed far, and yet must go
Still farther, till to Eman's halls I bring
Some wondrous bard, some magic-fingered one,
Will please my lord the King like him that's
gone ! ”

Then sat the dust-soiled minstrel sullen down,
Unslung his harp and bared its strings of gold
Before them all, and, with a troubled frown,
Played a light-tinkling prelude, and, behold !
Strange bliss the listeners' cares began to drown ;
Then voice and harp-notes, mingled sweet, uprolled
In a great soul-entrancing wondrous lay
That stole the hearts from out their breasts
straightway !

And when the lay was done, a glad thrill ran
Through the great crowd, and high before them all
The herald spoke : " O sweet-tongued, marvellous
man,
Blest be the day I see thee ! Bitter gall
Seems the best music that since life began
I've heard near thine. Never, in cot or hall,
Heard serf, or lord, or lady, one like thee !
Arise, and come to the King's house with me ! "

And so it fell the minstrel must abide

 In the King's house, in gay apparel clad,

And many a merry lay he sang belied

 His inward thoughts, for a sore heart he
 had.

Then came the Beltain feast, when all the pride

 Of Ulad's nobles came with bosoms glad

From many a moated town to Eman's hall

At the king's word to hold high festival.

And there Cuhullin came ; and with him came

 Bright Blanid, and love's boundless happiness

Had blotted from her mind the very name

 And memory of the bard, yet none the less

The dark man with his furtive eyes of flame

 Eyed her with rage his soul could scarce suppress,

As through the gorgeous throng each day she
 moved

In peerless beauty loving and beloved.

Three days the feast went on ; on the fourth morn
The glad hawks shook their wings and silver
bells

In the King's mews, the hounds, that all forlorn
In kennel slept, now woke with joyous yells
As the King's huntsman wound his echoing horn ;
And soon both King and court amid the dells
With hawk and hound went out to hunt the deer
And start the heron gray by brook and mere.

Three days they hunted ; on the third the chase
Led them unto the high top of a hill,
And there upon a breezy sunlit space
They reined their steeds ; before them a bright rill
Ran through a ferny gorge down th' eastern face
Of a steep slope in glittering falls, until
It reached a dale, where 'neath man's peaceful reign
Spread homesteads, gardens, groves, and fields of
grain.

Beyond the dale's rich verge, embellishèd

By many a stately tree, a forest grew,

Then a broad gleaming moorland far outspread,

Wrapped in light azure haze, then to the
view

A cape raised high its wave-impending head,

Then shimmering golden-green and silv'ry blue,

Like a wide mead of Asphodel, the sea

Stretched to the heavens its grand immensity.

Adown the slope they went, across the plain

And thro' the wood and up the cape's proud neck

To the flat top, where the soft summer rain

Brought from the grass wild-flowers in many a
speck.

There from their steeds they lighted, and full fain

The squires and pages at the blithe King's beck

Went to and fro, in merry mood, while fast

They pitched the tents and spread the gay repast.

And as they sat, in glorious symphony

The sea made music, and the summer air
Played in the branches of each wildwood tree

That round the cape's flat top grew here and there ;
The heavens shone bright, and midst that company
The mead went round in jewelled goblets rare,
The wine-cup sparkled, eyes met loving eyes,
And young hearts throbbed, and laughter gay
did rise.

Then some to cull the mountain flowers would go,

Some danced upon the sward, within the tent
Some hid them from the noontide sultry glow,

Some plied the wine-cup in light merriment ;
And she, the Bloom-bright One, now wandered
slow

Down to the cape's impending verge, and leant
Against an aged thorn that drooping stood
Through many a changing year o'er ocean's flood.

Pensive she stood against the mossy stem

 In her full joy, the roses of life's May

Tingeing her cheeks once more, and many a
 gem

Sparkling within her tresses golden gay ; —

Over the waves she leant, and looked on them

 As one who on a village green the play
Of children sees, and smiles as memory
Brings back some glimpse of childhood and its glee.

Anigh her sat the bard, his dark head bare,

 His wild keen eyes with a strange brightness
 filled,

The sea-breeze blowing through his curling hair,

 The sunshine gleaming as if but to gild

His harp-frame richly wrought ; and smiling there

 Anon the King came down, then sweetly thrilled
The music, and the courtiers gathered round
To hear the wondrous bard his harp-strings sound.

Then soft he touched the strings and made them
speak

In low love music, whose delightful tone
Deepened the roses red on Blamid's cheek,
Now like high trumpets on a war-field blown
He clashed the wires and sang, then low and weak
In dying sobs the melody did moan,
Then voice and strings broke forth in one wild wail
Of woe, that up the bright heaven seemed to sail !

Up sprang he then, his eyes with rage alight,
And dashed his harp down with a crashing clang,
And clutched the Bright One, and ere lord or
knight

Could rush between them, o'er the cliff he sprang,
Clutching her closely still ! Along the height

His last weird shout of vengeance lessening rang,
As far beneath amid the breakers' roar
They disappeared, and ne'er were looked on more !

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